GUITARS, CARS, WATCHES, WINE & THE DELUXE LIFE

GUITAR AFICIONADO

MAGAZINE

The Guitar of the FUTURE

PAGE 70

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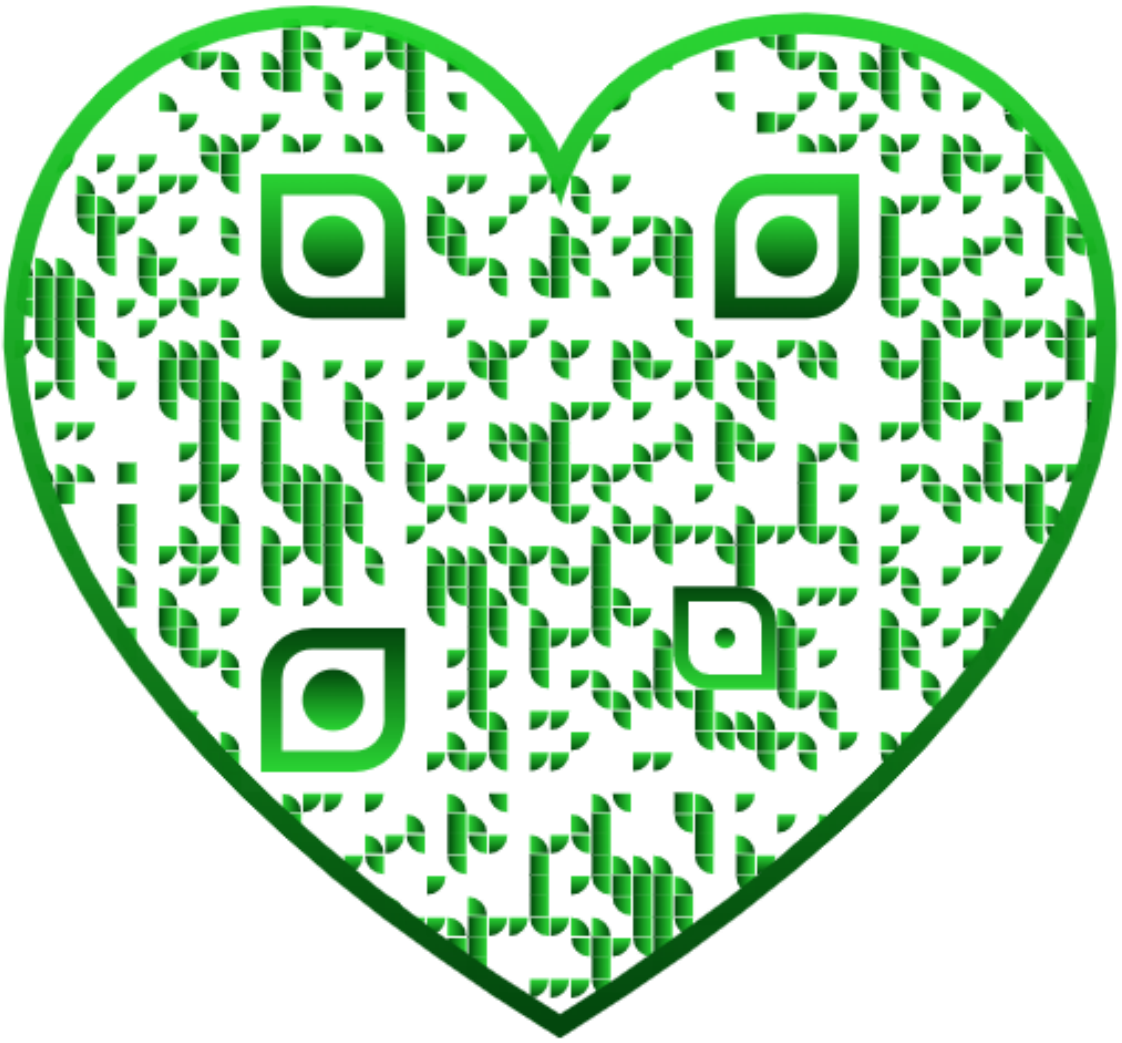

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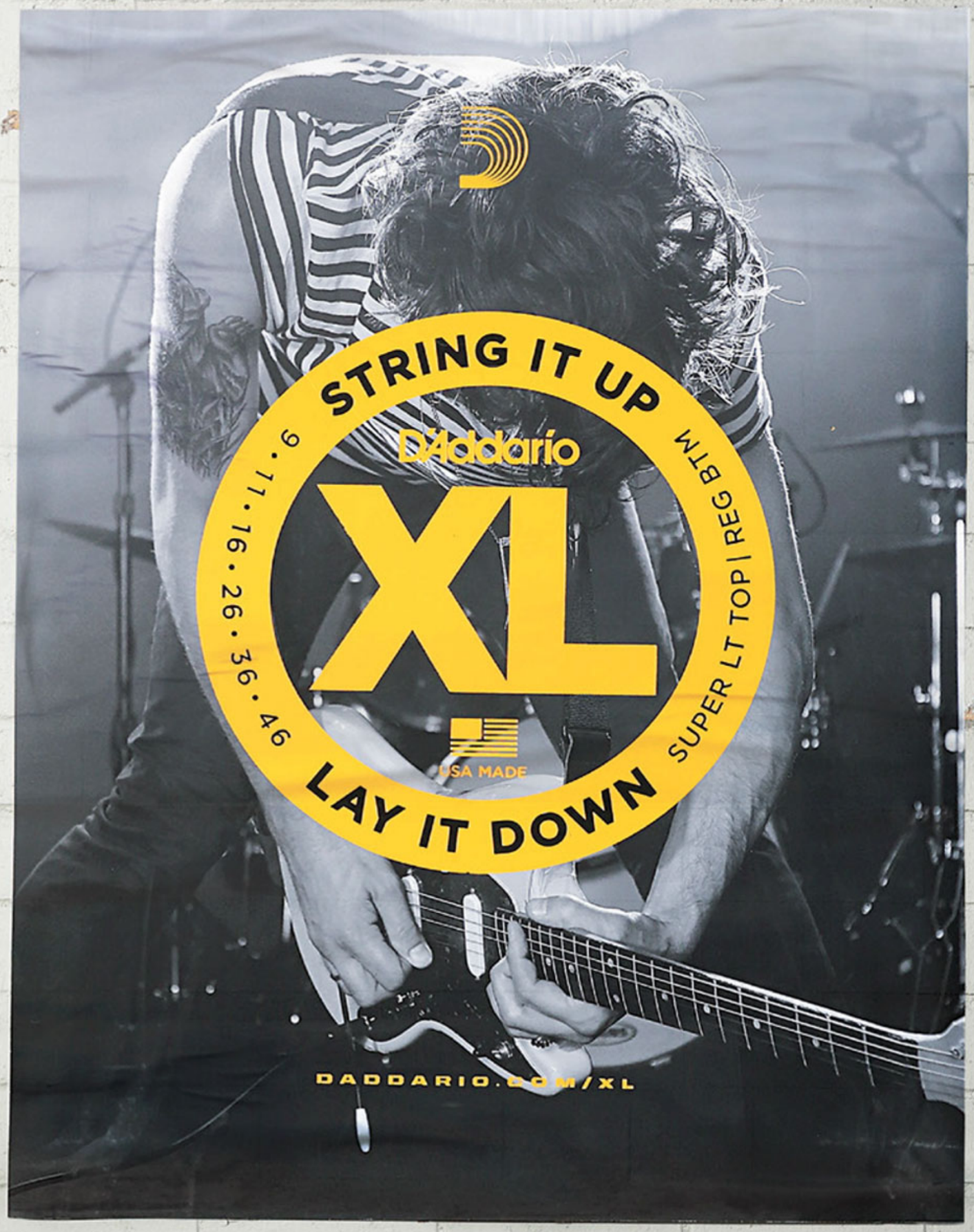

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LETTER *from the* EDITOR

VERY EARLY in my career as a guitar magazine editor I spent several days in early 1993 in Nashville at the Gruhn Guitars shop at 400 Broadway, which had just recently moved down the street a few doors from its previous location at 410 Broadway. I was there to shadow George Gruhn as he went about his daily business, watching him assess the condition and value of vintage guitars that arrived by the truckload to his shop and to listen to him philosophize about the vintage guitar business in general. Perhaps as impressive as George's incredibly deep knowledge of vintage guitar history was the fact that his store shipped out more guitars on an average day than most mid-size guitar manufacturers.

One day while George and I were hanging out in the repair shop upstairs, one of the store's employees brought up a pair of musicians. Customers generally weren't welcome on that floor, but the woman said that she wanted to meet George Gruhn. She was a guitar player herself who had an affection for vintage instruments, and she was looking forward to finally being able to meet a man she had heard so much about over the years. She also invited us to see her and her band play that night at a bar just across the street from Gruhn Guitars on Broadway.

Typical for me when subjected to hasty introductions, I had forgotten the woman's name after she left. However, after watching her and her ace band's ripping performance that night, I made note of the name—Sheryl Crow. Actually I didn't need a reminder as about a year and a half later I heard the single "All I Wanna Do" everywhere I went, and I recognized Crow and her sweet baby blue Tele in the song's video.

While Crow is a world-class songwriter, great guitarist (and bass player), and the owner of many wonderful vintage guitars and basses, she's not the type of artist who regularly appears in typical guitar magazines. Fortunately, *Guitar Aficionado* is not a typical guitar magazine, so I was thrilled when her publicist Rick Gershon at Warner Bros. reached out to us to see if we were interested in an interview.

Like many guitarists, Crow considers her instruments working tools. But, just like I saw that day nearly 25 years ago at Gruhn's, she also has an eye and ear for many of the finer specimens, which makes her a true guitar aficionado. I couldn't be more proud to finally feature her on the cover after all these years.

CHRIS GILL
Editor-in-Chief

GUITAR AFICIONADO

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Effects

NEW + COOL GUITAR

MAGIC IN THE AIR

SADOWSKY BROADWAY SERIES LS-13 AND SS-13

{ BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK }

ROGER SADOWSKY STARTED OUT building flattop acoustic guitars in the early Seventies, but after setting up his own business in New York City at the end of that decade, he began to make a name for himself within the guitar and bass community as the go-to guy for instrument modification. "My clients were all the top session players, and the musicians doing club dates and other gigs," Sadowsky says. "I spent those early years modifying their instruments to improve them as much as I could, which meant anything from really good fret jobs to installing electronic shielding for noise reduction, improved electronics, and—especially with basses—active tone circuits."

But as the vintage guitar market began to heat up in the Eighties, Sadowsky realized that his customizations, while providing superior tone and playability, also resulted in these instruments losing some value. "At that point I felt I could better serve my clients by making my own guitars and basses from scratch," he says. "That way I could go to sleep at night not worrying I had devalued an expensive vintage piece."

Since then, the Sadowsky name has become synonymous with high-end, high-quality players' instruments, particularly in the bass sphere. But Sadowsky has also built premium guitars for decades, including instruments he made for Prince

and a celebrated cadre of affordable laminate-constructed archtops. Now, Sadowsky has introduced his new Broadway Series, which consists of two new guitars, to his production line.

The two models, the LS-13 and SS-13 (the designation denotes "long scale" and "short scale," as well as a 13-inch body width), encapsulate all the knowledge and experience Sadowsky has gleaned from his 45 years of building, modifying, and repairing guitars and basses. For starters, both guitars boast chambered body cavities, a technique that Sadowsky has employed in all his builds for decades. "I started chambering my instruments as a way to reduce weight while also increasing resonance," he explains. "A lot of people in the industry have now come around to what I've been espousing for 35 years."

In addition to chambering, the Broadway Series models feature bodies built from a spruce core, which are then fitted with harder top and back woods. "Spruce is the number-one tonewood across the acoustic instrument spectrum, from guitars to mandolins to piano soundboards to the whole violin family," Sadowsky says. But, he explains, "it's also a soft wood. If it were exposed it would get dinged up in no time. So we decided to construct the body from 90 percent spruce and then pair it with a top and back, which finish out at about a tenth-of-an-inch thick, of a harder wood. To make it even more deluxe, the top and the back are matching cuts from the same billet. We offer a selection of standard-grade woods, which are really nice, and then we have our master-grade stuff, which is the absolute cream of the crop." That cream-of-the-crop wood is evidenced in the two models shown here, which boast master-grade quilt maple (LS-13) and master-grade koa (SS-13) tops and backs.

These premium woods extend to other areas of the guitars as well. Both models shown here feature Brazilian rosewood fingerboards (a range of rosewoods, including Amazon, Madagascar, and African, as well as rosewood alternatives, are also offered) atop maple (LS-13) and flame-roasted maple (SS-13) necks. Fretboard dot markers are optional, as is Sadowsky's trademark 12th-fret "skyline" inlay, constructed from different types of shell and shown here on the SS-13.

Pickup-wise, the SS-13, in keeping with its Gibson-like 24 3/4-inch shorter scale, offers a dual-humbucker configuration, while the LS-13, with its more Fender-ish 25 1/2-inch scale, adds a single-coil pickup in the center. "We have a true single-coil in the middle so that when the five-way selector is in positions two and four and the pickups split to single it hum-cancels and you get a good Strat-like sound," Sadowsky says of the LS-13 configuration. "If a customer wanted to split a humbucker in the neck or bridge by itself we can add a push-pull pot on the tone control to accomplish that." Both guitars have PAF-style humbuckers, custom-wound for Sadowsky by DiMarzio.

Both models are fitted with a volume knob, two tone knobs, and a pickup selector switch, all of which, in a nice touch, is offered in two layouts. "For my entire career, my clientele has largely been working musicians, and working musicians have specific needs," Sadowsky says. "That's why I do a Fender scale length and a Gibson scale length—I like to embrace those differences. With the control layout, there are players

"I'VE COME TO BELIEVE THAT SOLIDBODY INSTRUMENTS ARE FIRST AND FOREMOST ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS."

— ROGER SADOWSKY

who prefer the knobs closer to the strings in order to do things like pinkie rolls, for example, on the volume control. Then there are guitarists who find that the knobs get in the way of the selector switch, and they'd rather have the switch closer to the strings. We accommodate both."

Additionally, both Broadway Series guitars boast Sadowsky's custom mid-boost preamp. "My history on the preamp goes back to the late Eighties," Sadowsky says. "I developed a circuit where the player could boost the mids and gain independently. On these guitars, there's a three-position mini toggle where the first position is total bypass, the middle position activates a midrange boost that makes the guitar thicker, fatter, and hairier, and the back setting is an additional gain boost on top of wherever the mid boost is set. The amount of gain is adjustable via a trim pot on the circuit board. We set it to a lower level for taking a solo, but you can max it out if you want to overdrive your amp."

Hardware on both guitars includes top-of-the-line Gotoh vintage tuners and Gotoh bridges (available in both tremolo and hard tail), as well as custom Graph Tech TUSQ XL nuts and steel saddles. The result is an understated but elegant package where the wood, both visually and tonally, speaks for itself.

"That's always been my stylistic approach," Sadowsky says. "I'm not into a lot of flashy stuff that doesn't bring value to the instrument from a playing and tonal point of view. After years of repairing and modding electric guitars, I've come to believe that solidbody instruments are first and foremost acoustic instruments, and the better they sound acoustically the better they sound amplified. When I was doing mods, I was always driven to offer maximum playability without unnecessary bells and whistles. To this day, that's what I attempt to provide in my own instruments as well."

– – – – –

LIST PRICE: $5,900 and up
As Shown: LS-13: $8,175 (master-grade quilt maple top and back; master-grade Brazilian rosewood fingerboard); SS-13: $9,600 (master-grade koa top and back; master-grade Brazilian rosewood fingerboard; master-grade flame roasted maple neck; Sadowsky "Skyline" inlay at 12th fret)
Sadowsky Guitars, sadowsky.com

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

IRISH GOLD

WHISKEY FROM THE EMERALD ISLE IS ENJOYING AN IMPRESSIVE RESURGENCE.

{ BY CHRIS GILL }

THE IRISH WERE the first inhabitants of the British Isles to distill spirits, and Irish Whiskey enjoyed status as the world's most popular spirit during the 19th century. However, over time interest in Irish Whiskey had declined to the point that until a few years ago only three Whiskey distilleries remained in business there. Over the last ten years numerous new distilleries opened in Ireland, and today 16 are in operation and another 15 or so are opening soon. Along with this phenomenal growth comes an impressive variety of high-quality spirits that show that Irish Whiskey today is much more than the popular inexpensive blends that previously dominated their production.

Teeling, a new distillery based in Dublin, produces an impressive non-chill filtered Single Grain Whiskey made from a 95 percent corn mash bill and matured in barrels previously used to age California Cabernet Sauvignon. On the palate it reveals a nutty, mineral character with subtle hints of sweetness and spice but without the candy shop character often encountered in Bourbon and other corn whiskies.

Powers Gold Label from the Midleton distillery in Midleton, County Cork, has remained the most popular Whiskey in Ireland itself for several decades, but true Irish Whiskey enthusiasts should check out Powers' more limited Single Pot Still whiskies. Powers John's Lane Single Pot Still Whiskey is aged 12 years in a combination of American oak Bourbon casks and Iberian oak Sherry casks and delivers an assertive malt character with bold spiciness and honeyed sweetness.

Located far to the north in Bushmills, County Antrim, the Old Bushmills distillery is the oldest licensed distillery in the entire world. Bushmills' Single Malt Whiskies impressively hold their own compared to many fine Single Malt Scotches. Bushmills 16 Year Single Malt is aged 16 years in Oloroso Sherry and Bourbon casks and matured for several months in Port barrels, which give it a toasty, nutty character with a sweet dried fruit finish.

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{ ANNOTATIONS BY SCOTT HICKEY }

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GRAND SEIKO

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To honor Seiko's legacy, the Japanese firm updated one of its historic models as this limited edition (968 pieces). For this modern incarnation, the brand developed a new automatic movement that has a larger date for improved legibility. Its textured dial contrasts pleasingly with the high polish of the 40.5mm case, which is made of "Brilliant Hard Titanium," a proprietary alloy made exclusively by Seiko.

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IN A NUTSHELL

WHEN IT COMES TO PISTACHIOS, THE BRONTE VARIETY FROM SICILY ARE MUCH MORE THAN THEY'RE CRACKED UP TO BE.

{ BY MICHAEL COLAMECO }

OCCASIONALLY WHILE TRAVELING I'll have these culinary epiphanies, tasting something I've never had before, or tasting something familiar that was just so much better than what I was used to eating. I'll never forget a lunch I had years back at the Michelin three-star restaurant Girardet in the tiny village of Crissier, Switzerland, where part of the dessert course I enjoyed was little bowls of fresh *fraises des bois* with whipped *creme fraiche*. These tiny, delicate wild strawberries were picked earlier that morning as they have almost no shelf life. Although these strawberries are extraordinarily delicate, they were packed with so much flavor it was astonishing. It was my first time tasting them, and they were like nothing I'd ever had before. Another mid-summer trip had me sampling fresh apricots of the Wachauer Marille variety, grown only in the Wachau Valley of Austria northwest of Vienna, that set my benchmark for apricots forever.

Sicily is justly famous for many wonderful things in the culinary world, and Bronte variety pistachios are one of the Mediterranean island's jewels. Grown in volcanic soil near Mount Etna in the province of Catania in Eastern Sicily, they are farmed naturally and never fertilized or irrigated —a rarity in the world of commercial nuts. Bronte pistachios make a killer pesto, great cakes, delicious cookies, or any item or dish that has pistachios as an ingredient. They are a welcome surprise when tossed with pasta or turned into any complementary flavor of ice cream or gelato.

While California has a large pistachio crop, 97 percent of California pistachios are a Pistacia Vera cultivar called "Kerman," originally introduced from Iran in 1957. As is the case with most commercial crops, Kerman pistachios are genetically developed to deliver high yields when given enough irrigation and chemical fertilizers. However, when the goal is simply high yields—as is the case with most domestic commercial agriculture in the United States—it almost always sacrifices flavor for yields and shelf life. Other countries with large pistachio crops of different varieties include Iran, Syria, Turkey, and Australia. But as is the case with most fresh fruits, vegetables, and nuts, whether the crop is grapes, olives, or tomatoes, farming practices, soil type, and genetic differences greatly affect the flavor profiles.

Pistachio yields swing from year-to-year, with very good years followed by very low yielding ones to assure the health of the tree itself. Pistachio trees in Sicily can live to be over 300 years old, and the harvests, which take place every other year, occur in late August and September. Harvesting is done exclusively by hand, and everyone in the town pitches in.

While Bronte variety pistachios are expensive, we're not talking white truffle prices here. Even better is the fact that these pistachios are readily available at many retail locations all over the country as well as via mail order. A recent Google search delivered several convenient suppliers, including Amazon.

As a chef, I'm a big proponent of sourcing only the best ingredients. Usually this means local, organic, sustainable, grass-fed, and antibiotic-free, which inevitably also means higher prices for these goods. My advice is to eat less food overall, but make it all good and clean. The increase in flavor and enjoyment more than makes up for the smaller portions. When it comes to nuts for snacking, baking, or cooking, I highly recommend Bronte pistachios as an affordable luxury.

New York City–based chef and media personality Michael Colameco is the author of *Mike Colameco's Food Lover's Guide to NYC* and hosts *Colameco's Food Show* on PBS and the nationally syndicated radio program *Weekend Food*.

PHOTOS (FROM TOP): OLLIRG / ISTOCK; BREGANNI / ISTOCK

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GUITAR ARTISTRY

THE 2017 ARTISAN GUITAR SHOW WAS A CELEBRATION OF THE ART OF GUITAR-MAKING AND MUSIC.

MORE THAN 50 international exhibitors gathered April 7-9 at the 2017 Artisan Guitar Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to display hand-crafted guitars and associated products, from humidity-controlled guitar habitats to finely constructed guitar stands.

A highlight of the event was a concert series that presented an international array of performers, including touring artists, legendary studio session players, and respected music educators. Grammy-winning artist David Cullen, Sirius XM favorite Clarence Bucaro, and renowned guitarists Stephen Bennett and Robin Bullock were among the performers.

Diverse master classes were presented throughout the weekend. Workshops focused on state-of-the-industry, historical, technical, and performance technique perspectives. Jack Daniel's hosted a workshop that discussed the importance of wood selection in both whiskey and guitar making. Sturgis' Buffalo Chip concert producer Rod Woodruff gave a presentation on the history of live performances and anecdotes about Sturgis, and its growth since becoming a motorcycle mecca in the Seventies.

Event producer John Detrick commented, "The hand-crafted guitar world is truly a place where pure form meets absolute function. It is a great community with talented and nice people. I am very excited to announce that the Artisan Guitar Show will continue." Future show dates, locations, and event components for 2018 will be announced.

(clockwise from top left) Guitar by Dean Hankinson Studios; Kevin Sanders and Dave Stang, Jack Daniel's; Stu and Wendy Mono, Take A Stand; Ryan and Lynn Sauter, Acoustic Remedy Cases; Antonio Palumbo, with Rod Woodruff, President of Buffalo Chip at Sturgis; John Farrell and Gerry Heinrich, American Music Furniture; Dave Evans and Dick Boak, C.F. Martin

PHOTOS BY PAUL V PHOTOGRAPHY; (PALUMBO AND WOODRUFF) CARLO AND BRITTANY PALUMBO

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SWINGING GUITARS

RUDY'S MUSIC HOSTS A VERY SPECIAL TRIBUTE AND VIEWING OF THE PERSONAL GUITAR COLLECTION THAT BELONGED TO JAZZ LEGEND TAL FARLOW.

THE TAL FARLOW guitar collection (featured in the May/June 2017 issue of *Guitar Aficionado*) was displayed to a select group of guests when Rudy's Music in SoHo, New York, hosted an invitation-only VIP event on April 27. In addition to being able to get an up close and personal look at seven important guitars from Farlow's career, including a prototype for his Gibson Tal Farlow model, attendees were treated to performances by several jazz guitar legends such as Gene Bertoncini, Vic Juris, and Jack Wilkins.

Luminaries from all facets of the guitar world were in attendance, including rock legend Steve Miller, master archtop luthier John Monteleone, vintage dealer Drew Berlin, and author/historian Peter Szego. Farlow's widow, Michele Hyk, was also there, and she explained why she felt it was finally time for Tal's guitars to find a new home.

Bottles of Duke Bourbon and Layer Cake Sea of Stones wine were poured in celebration of Farlow's life and contributions to jazz guitar. The party continued well into the night as various jazz guitarists took the stage to perform stunning renditions of standards associated with Farlow's legacy. A few even took turns playing Farlow's signature model prototype, which was his main guitar for many years. "Tal is definitely with us tonight!" joked guitarist Jack Wilkins as feedback howling from a Fender amp interrupted his performance.

(clockwise from top) Tal Farlow's various Gibsons on display; Duke Bourbon and Layer Cake wines provided refreshment; (left to right) Rudy Pensa, Farlow's widow Michele Hyk, Drew Berlin; Steve Miller tells a story about Tal; Vic Juris (left) and Gene Bertoncini perform for the crowd.

PHOTOS BY CHRIS GILL

What Clients are saying about the Stauer Guitar Watch

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"It keeps great time and has stood up to band practice very well!"
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Meet your new favorite rock star. My only advice to the designers was to make a watch that looks exactly like rock and roll sounds. Big, bold and loud enough to wake the neighbors. It should evoke images of Bill Haley, Buddy Holly, The King and The Boss strumming crowds into a frenzy. But it should also reverberate with the spirit of the world's greatest rock guitar gods like Jimi, Eric and Keith (who was featured on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine wearing a Stauer watch). As you can see, the final product is worthy of a standing ovation.

It's only rock and roll, but we like it. One look at the Stauer ***Guitar Watch's*** voluptuous stainless steel body will bring you right back to the glory days of 45 and 33 rpm records. The eye-catching shape of the case recalls the round-bottomed bodies of the greatest vintage electric guitars.

The unique, ivory-colored face features blue Roman numerals on the left of the dial and bold Arabic numbers on the right. Blued, Breguet-style hands keep time while additional complications mark the day, date and month. A date window sits at the 3 o'clock position. Inside, the 27-ruby-jewel movement utilizes an automatic self-winding mechanism that never needs batteries. The watch secures with a genuine black leather band and is water-resistant to 3 ATM.

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The Beatles at a *Sgt. Pepper's* press conference in London on May 19, 1967.

SPICE WORLD

ON ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY, *SGT. PEPPER'S* IS RE-EXAMINED AMID THE GLOBAL EVENTS THAT SHAPED ITS MUSIC AND THE ERA.

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band: The Album, the Beatles, and the World in 1967
By Brian Southall
Imagine (192 pages, $30)

HAILED AS A groundbreaking studio masterpiece ever since its release 50 years ago, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* demonstrated that pop music could be as artful, innovative, and worthy of critical analysis as classical or jazz.

Revolutionary though it may be, *Sgt. Pepper's* is one of many pop-art works from an era when social change was sweeping the continents, from Europe to North America. The Beatles were themselves caught up in the moment: as Paul McCartney explained, "The mood of the album was in the spirit of the age, because we ourselves were fitting into the mood of the time."

That age comes into sharp focus in *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band: The Album, the Beatles, and the World in 1967*. Author Brian Southall recounts the stories behind the period's music and cultural climate, exploring the hippie movement, antiwar protests, and other counterculture forces that shaped the album and the decade.

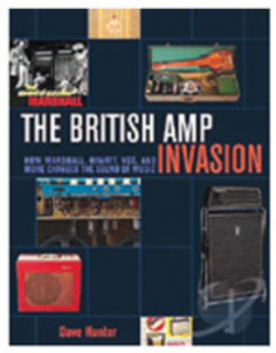
The story takes place largely in London and San Francisco, where distinct counterculture movements were underway throughout much of the mid Sixties. The British scene was dominated by Mods, whose indulgence in high fashion and amphetamines marked an alarming shift from England's postwar polite society. By late 1966, the phenomenon blossomed into the Swinging London era, epitomized by musical acts like the Kinks and Cream, and famous for the advent of the miniskirt, sexual liberation, and avant-garde multimedia "happenings." It was against this fertile creative backdrop that the Beatles made *Sgt. Pepper's*.

Meanwhile, in San Francisco's low-rent Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, young hippies were creating their own communal nirvana, complete with pot, LSD, and homegrown music by local acts like the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, and Big Brother and the Holding Company. By the dawn of 1967, thousands of young dreamers converged on the Haight, drawn by hope of a new, free society.

Released on June 1, *Sgt. Pepper's* became a unifying soundtrack to this intercontinental youth movement, a moment fondly remembered as the Summer of Love. Some two weeks later, the U.S. and British music scenes were officially united in the groundbreaking Monterey International Pop Festival, which launched the U.S. careers of the Who and Jimi Hendrix. These and other touchstones of the era come to life in Southall's prose, supported by photographs that present the world as it existed when one of the most famous albums of all time was released.

—Christopher Scapelliti

BOOK



THE BRITISH AMP INVASION: HOW MARSHALL, HIWATT, VOX, AND MORE CHANGED THE SOUND OF MUSIC
By Dave Hunter
Backbeat Books (160 pages, $29.99)
The British Invasion groups of the Sixties changed the sound of rock and roll, and they did it with amps from Vox, Marshall, Hiwatt, and Orange, among others. These were the British brands that powered the music of artists like the Beatles, Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Pete Townshend, and Jimi Hendrix, from the clubs of the beat scene to the arenas of the hard-rock era. In *The British Amp Invasion*, music gear historian Dave Hunter explores each of the major brands through anecdotes and photography, revealing how these British upstarts became unlikely challengers to U.S. amp makers and produced some of the most potent rock tones ever heard.

AUDIO

LIVE IN BIRMINGHAM 2016
Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow
Eagle Rock Entertainment ($14.99)
In June 2016, Ritchie Blackmore delivered his first rock and roll performances in 19 years when he retooled his former group Rainbow for a pair of concerts at Monsters of Rock in Germany. Those two shows were caught on camera for the film *Memories in Rock*, released by Eagle Vision and Eagle Records in November 2016. This new two-CD set captures the complete audio from Rainbow's follow-up performance at Genting Arena in Birmingham, England. The set list combines classic Deep Purple and Rainbow tracks, including two cuts from the Mark III Deep Purple era—"Soldier of Fortune" and "Burn"—not included in the Germany shows.

PHOTO BY JOHN PRATT / STRINGER, VIA GETTY IMAGES

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True Colors

With nearly 25 years of experience as a solo artist, Sheryl Crow reveals that the secret to her success is also the title of her new album: *Be Myself*.

BY **JOE BOSSO**
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **JEFF FASANO**

Crow with her 1962 Gibson Country Western

In a business obsessed with youth, Sheryl Crow is an anomaly. Several times during our interview, whether she's talking about protecting her two young sons from spending too much time on social media or how she currently approaches her writing process,

she makes self-deprecating references to her age, calling herself "an old lady" or "an elder stateswoman of rock 'n' roll." It's a little surprising at first. One's first reaction to her statements is to let out a startled laugh, but it's quickly apparent that her words are no put-on. At 55, Crow is quite comfortable in her skin.

It wasn't always that way. Back in 2001, as she was eyeing the big 4-0, Crow started to question who she was and if the music she was writing still had a place in the market—this, despite her string of massive hits and Grammy wins. "Here I was, about to turn 40, and everybody on the radio was, like, 12," she observes. "Britney Spears was new on the scene and was crushing it, and Christina Aguilera was coming up. Everybody was getting younger and younger. I really started to feel like a dinosaur."

Crow had kept up a punishing pace of recording and touring during the preceding decade, never taking a moment to rest or reflect. "I kept saying, 'Okay, after this record I'm going to take some time off,' " she says. "And, of course, I never did." Things finally came to a head during the recording of her fourth album, 2002's *C'mon, C'mon*, the sessions for which she calls "the hardest I've ever experienced—a lot of teeth gnashing."

It took a visit from her friend Chrissie Hynde to put things in perspective. "Chrissie came to the studio, and she saw what I was going through," Crow says. "She just looked at me and said, 'What the hell are you doing? You gotta stop this. Music isn't your life; it's something you *do* in your life.' That made such a difference."

In response, Crow awarded herself with a well-earned break, laying low for eight full months. When her 40th birthday rolled around, she celebrated the milestone by throwing herself a giant party. Fully rejuvenated, she and Jeff Trott—her frequent collaborator, with whom she's written a number of hits such as "My Favorite Mistake" and "If It Makes You Happy"—cooked up "Soak Up the Sun," an unabashed good-time pop single that not only became one of Crow's biggest smashes but also landed her on the dance charts for the first time. Crow was finished beating herself up, and was determined to balance life and career on her own terms.

Her new album, *Be Myself*, reflects this mindset. On it, Crow addresses social, political, and deeply personal issues with a biting wit and relaxed, confident candor. The disc's 11 immediately memorable cuts seamlessly blend the country/blues and rock-and-roll grit of her first three albums with *C'mon, C'mon*'s breezy pop hooks. "Writing has become easier," she explains. "I think a few things in my life have changed, like the ability to get out of my own way. That's largely just due to getting older and being okay with it. There's something strangely liberating about knowing you're not competing with a bunch of 20-year-olds at radio. I can say what I want."

Crow outside her Nashville studio with 1965 Gibson ES-335

In the album's groove-rock title cut, Crow gently ribs herself for past missteps: "Saw my shrink today. He said, 'Girl, I can't help you. I've been seeing you so long, but nothing has changed.' " One could easily make a case that the song represents something of a mission statement, and it does, even if it took a while for Crow to come around to that notion. "I felt like 'Be Myself' wasn't as weighty as everything else, so I hated the idea of calling the album that," she says. "But the more I thought about it, I realized that the song says a lot, and I made my peace with it. And now I feel like it's really so *apropos*." She laughs, then reveals that she almost called the record *Music for Adults*. "Because that's what it is."

In stark contrast to how she recorded some of her past efforts ("late nights, wine, and a lot of blood, sweat, and tears"), Crow and co-producer Trott composed and tracked *Be Myself* in an angst-free, leisurely fashion at the singer's Nashville studio, which is housed in a gray-wood multiuse barn just off her main property. In the mornings, Crow would drop her sons (Wyatt, 10, and Levi, 7) off at school, and then she and Trott would work throughout the day, calling it quits at dinnertime. "I stopped buying into that whole 'get into a studio so you can feel the pressure of spending money' thing," she says. "I used to do that, but I would wait for inspiration and waste a bunch of time and money. Now I feel like a grown-up making records. I would not forsake, in any way shape or form, my home life for having to drive across town and go to a studio."

Nashville has been Crow's place of residence for the past 11 years, and she collaborated with some of the town's top-flight talent (Chris Stapleton, Brad Paisley, Chris DuBois, Kelley Lovelace, and Brent Anderson, among others) on her 2013 country-drenched album, *Feels Like Home*. While she enjoyed the experience of cutting that record, promoting it was less to her liking, causing her to re-examine how she and Trott would address the follow-up. *Be Myself*, like the title suggests, would

SHELL
GASOLINE
BARB WIRE

With early Fifties Fender Precision Bass; (right) This mid-Thirties Gibson L-00 is one of Crow's many vintage Gibson acoustics.

"There's something strangely liberating about knowing you're not competing with a bunch of 20-year-olds at radio."

be a more-intimate and less-calculated affair, much like her earlier albums.

"Jeff and I actually went back and listened to the second and third records," she explains. "The idea wasn't to repeat myself but to recapture a vibe. I found that I could really appreciate those records. Sometimes you have to get a certain distance from what you did years ago to be able to come back to it. I know I've grown as a writer, musician, and producer over the years, but there was something about the sheer spirit of the early records that I liked. Maybe that comes from youth, but a lot of it is just your attitude. That's what I wanted to feel this time out."

That spirit comes through on a number of the new tracks, most notably on the supple, sinuous rockers "Alone in the Dark," "Halfway There," and "Strangers Again," on which Crow surveys broken relationships with the heart of a mature woman and the musical soul of a young Rolling Stone. With the exception of the album closer, "Woo Woo," she wrote all of the tracks with Trott, and she isn't shy about heaping praise on his songwriting prowess. "I call Jeff 'my musical husband,' " she says with a laugh. "We have similar sensibilities when it comes to things like structure and what makes a good song. We have an unspoken way of collaborating that I don't have with other people. Also, he just plays what I love to hear, and I tend to write what he likes to hear.

"When we pick up instruments, we fill in the spaces together," she continues. "Jeff is an amazing guitar player—his feel, his tones. He can set up a chorus with a great guitar hook, and that's something I just don't do. I'm more of a meat-and-potatoes player—I play rhythm, and I don't do musical hooks on the guitar. So he's invaluable in that regard, in addition to everything else."

Although she's always acquitted herself as a solid electric guitarist in the past, Crow chose to handle only acoustic tracks on *Be Myself*, sticking mainly to her 1962 Gibson Country Western model, which was the basis for her signature model, which Gibson introduced in 1999. (The guitar maker also offered a Sheryl Crow Southern Jumbo Special Edition in 2013.) "The Country Western is the money maker," she notes. "Almost all the songs I've written that made any money were written on that guitar, so it's my go-to acoustic."

Starting with her 1996 eponymous album, Crow gravitated toward the bass both live and in the studio. She performed all the bass tracks on the new record. As she describes it, a typical writing session for *Be Myself* saw her on bass (either a 1974 Guild M85 II or a 1967 Fender Precision Bass going direct), with Trott churning out riffs and rhythms on guitar (he favored a 1960 Guild M-75 Aristocrat, a 1967 Gibson SG Junior, and a 1964 Gibson ES-335 plugged into either a vintage Vox AC10 or a brand-new Fender Blues Junior Lacquered Tweed 15-watt 1x12 combo). Nashville native Andrew Petroff completed the picture, programming drum loops for the pair to work from.

"Occasionally, I'll write on guitar or piano,"

Crow says, "but there's something about using a bass that just makes me think differently. When I write on bass, I find that I write stronger melodies. I think it's because you tend to hold down the note, so you sing over the top of it as opposed to making melodies fit when you're whacking out chord changes on a guitar. Same thing happens on the piano: I play chords, so I try to make the melodies fit. The bass just makes things float a different way, and the melodies come out smoother. And I really like playing the bass live. I've been doing it for a while, so I'm really comfortable with it. People say it's hard to sing and play bass, but I don't even think about it."

She credits producer Bill Botrell, with whom she's worked on and off since her 1993 debut, *Tuesday Night Music Club*, for educating her about studio gear. The "command post" of Crow's barn studio boasts a duo of analog consoles (an API 1608 and a Neve BCM10) along with a slew of vintage outboard gear and microphones. She has favored analog recording over the years, but

"When I write on bass, I find that I write stronger melodies. I think it's because you tend to hold down the note."

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thanks to engineer Tchad Blake, she's become more open minded about the possibilities offered by digital. "Working with Tchad has been pretty eye-opening," she says. "He always seemed to be old-school, but he can work with Pro Tools and plug-ins and get the most incredible sounds. It's helped me let go of my snobbery about digital."

Crow and Trott were just about finished cutting the swampy blues-rocker "Heartbeat Away" (on which the singer references a "man with a red face with his finger on the button") when they decided to catch their friend Doyle Bramhall II performing in town. As it turned out, Bramhall had the next day off and he accepted Crow's invitation to come down to the barn and lay down some wildcat solos. "I didn't give him any direction other than, 'Do what Doyle Bramhall II would do,' " Crow says. "He knows I'm a huge fan, so I just wanted him to be who he is. I turned him loose."

> "There was something about the sheer spirit of the early records that I liked."

The singer is also effusive when it comes to modern blues great Gary Clark Jr., who provides "wacka" guitar and screaming lead lines on "Halfway There." "I've known him for a few years now, and I'm such a big fan," she says. "He's truly anointed and is the great hope, as far as music's concerned." Crow sent an audio file of the basics to Clark, giving him the same sort of direction she gave to Bramhall. "I told him, 'There's a hole here, so make it your own,' " she says. "He sent back some choices and totally nailed it. He's such a special and gifted guy, and you can feel the weight when he plays. He made the track a really beautiful thing."

Living in Nashville puts Crow deep in the heart of guitar country. When not tending to the business of music or child-rearing, she still frequents Gruhn Guitars, where she's been a loyal customer since her salad days. While she doesn't categorize herself a mad collector—she plays what she owns—she admits that she has her eye on acquiring a couple of drool-worthy pieces: a 1952 Fender "blackguard" Telecaster and a vintage three-quarter-size Gibson ES-140T. "The Gibson is the dream guitar I want right now," she says. "I'd love to find a blonde one, but so far I'm not having any luck. Maybe one'll turn up. I'm hopeful." GA

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Big BAND Theory

JULY/AUG 2017
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SOME MIGHT CONSIDER FOUR GUITARISTS IN ONE BAND A FEW TOO MANY, BUT THE TRIO OF SUPPORTING GUITARISTS IN *The Zac Brown Band* HAVE FIGURED OUT THE WAY TO MAKE THINGS WORK.

BY *Joe Bosso* PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Eleanor Jane*

Zac
Brown

WHEN ANY BAND hits the big time, its success is never about just one thing. In the case of the Atlanta-based Zac Brown Band's steady ascendance from regional club stars in the mid 2000s to the Grammy-winning international arena fillers they are today, their success can be chalked up to relatable, honest messages, a reputation for serving up thunderous, joyous shows, and a big tent of hook-filled songs that span a wealth of musical styles: bluegrass, Southern rock, traditional and modern country, reggae, and even a smattering of grunge and EDM.

The band's own tent has grown considerably over the years. What began as a gutsy little four-piece (guitar, bass, drums, and violin) is now a veritable all-star musical army with eight members in all, featuring leader Zac Brown (guitar, lead vocals), Chris Fryar (drums), Jimmy Di Martini (violin, vocals), Matt Mangano (bass), Daniel de los Reyes (percussion), along with a trio of highly skilled multi-taskers: Clay Cook (guitar, keyboards, mandolin, and vocals), Coy Bowles (guitar, keyboards), and founding member John Driskell Hopkins—Hop, for short—who handles guitar, banjo, ukulele, and vocals.

"It's been a really exciting adventure for all of us," says Bowles, who put his own group, Coy Bowles and the Fellowship, on hold to join the Zac Brown Band in 2006. "We've added percussion, another guitar player, and a bass player, and we've swapped some roles here and there. It all grew with the music, and it's taken place under our very eyes. It's kind of like watching a girl you've been friends with your whole life blossom into this beautiful, talented, and smart woman. That's kind of a weird analogy, but you know what I mean."

One of the biggest changes of late to the ever-changing outfit involves the move of Hop from bass to guitar, banjo, and ukulele duties. Although he's certainly a talented bassist, Hop admits that he only agreed to fill out the rhythm section upon the band's formation simply because nobody else was available. "It was actually kind of a joke," he says. "I told Zac, 'I'll sit in until you find somebody permanent.' " Prior to the ZBB, Hop's only experiences as a bassist were a brief stint in a high school band and a later role as an upright bass player in a theater production.

However, a month into his tenure with the ZBB, Hop felt comfortable enough with the four-string that he told Brown to call off the search for a replacement. "I heard what we were doing, and I thought, 'We are gonna whoop some ass. I'm not going anywhere!' " Hop says. He remained on the bass until 2014, when Brown hired his longtime friend Matt Mangano to fill the slot, allowing Hop to contribute his talents elsewhere.

(Previous page, left to right) Coy Bowles, John Driskell Hopkins, and Clay Cook backstage at London's O2 Arena, March 12, 2017;

(right) Coy Bowles with his Ibanez CBM100 Artist signature model.

Before Cook signed on to the ZBB, he had been something of an all-purpose journeyman, playing sax, flute, keyboards, and guitar for the Marshall Tucker Band (his uncle, Doug Cook, is the band's lead singer) and then performing with artists such as Sugarland and Shawn Mullins. He sharpened his musical skills at the Berklee College of Music, where he befriended a young guitarist from Connecticut named John Mayer.

"John wanted to be the next Stevie Ray Vaughan, and I wanted to be the next Jimmy Vivino—you know, playing guitar in a cool band on TV," Cook recalls. "We hit it off and found songwriting together—I was getting immersed in James Taylor at that point." Cook and Mayer formed a short-lived duo, the Lo-Fi Masters, and a few of their co-writes—"No Such Thing," "Neon," and "Love Song for No One"—wound up on Mayer's debut album, *Room for Squares*.

The idea all along for the ZBB was to pool together the talents of a disparate batch of musicians into a unified team, one in which no member would outshine the other. To that end, Cook, Bowles, and Hop are each uniquely suited. Cook grew up hearing the records by the Marshall Tucker Band (no surprise), and he calls the group's late guitarist, Toy Caldwell, "his foundation." By his teens, he gravitated to early Van Halen and the sounds of Seattle. "Pearl Jam was really great," he enthuses. "They were fresh, but they also had a classic rock and even a Southern rock vibe to me."

Like Cook, Bowles also dug grunge—he calls Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard his first guitar hero—but most of his musical schooling came by way of classic rock and pop. "The Allman Brothers, Neil Young, and Crosby, Stills and Nash—that came from my dad," he says. "My mom was more of a Top 40 radio person, so there was always a lot of Hall and Oates, Eddie Money, Bruce Springsteen, and John Mellencamp. She liked some weird Eighties pop, too, Duran Duran and all that."

Clay Cook with early Fifties blackguard Fender Esquire.

For his part, Hop brings a softer side to the ZBB, citing the Indigo Girls as his biggest musical influence. "When I was in high school, that's the music I wanted to write—heartfelt folk singer/songwriter stuff," he remembers. "The acoustic has always been my first love as far as guitar goes, and it's the only thing I write music on. A lot of folkier-type stuff calls for capos and alternate tunings, and I've always been into that, especially on a baritone acoustic, which really seems to suit my vocal range."

All agree that there's no room for prima donnas in the ZBB, and when it comes to recording it's an all-hands-on-deck affair, with each member assuming a specific role and playing a dedicated part and instrument that suits the song in question. On past albums, Cook has sometimes played pedal steel and mandolin, but on the group's new album, *Welcome Home*, he focused more on piano, Hammond organ, and guitar.

Bowles played piano, organ and guitar as well, but he says there's never a situation in which he and Cook are duking it out for the same sonic space. "If one guy is doing one thing, then the other guy is doing something else," he explains. "And even when Clay and I are both playing guitar, there's never a problem because our styles are so different. If we're playing a ballad, I'll do some kind of ethereal slide stuff and he'll hold down a picking or strumming thing. Or I'll pick some kind of arpeggiated thing and he'll do double-stops. It just works out."

There's never any danger of Cook or Bowles stepping on Hop's toes: The utility player, when not strumming an acoustic or laying down power chords on electric, is the exclusive banjo and ukulele specialist in the group. "If it's a beachy song I'll gravitate toward my ukulele, which is a great complement to Zac's nylon-string guitar," Hop says. "If it's more of a country/bluegrass thing, I'll pick up the banjo. The banjo parts are fun to figure out, and I play the ukulele like a mandolin. It's musically challenging. I love adding all sorts of spices to the songs."

Having experimented with electronics and big-beat dance numbers on 2015's *Jekyll + Hyde*, the ZBB wanted to get back in touch with their Southern rock roots on *Welcome Home* (they even have a mission-statement album opener, "Roots," which features a soaring, double-tracked solo by co-writer Bowles, to make that sentiment abundantly clear). They chose the hottest producer in the land, Dave Cobb, to keep them on track. Cobb's a fellow Georgia native, which made ice-breakers unnecessary ("He knows the lingo and all the jokes," remarks Bowles), and he's not big on protracted studio sessions, which suited the band just fine.

"Dave doesn't want to lose the energy of that first or second take," Cook notes. "He wanted to get us in there running through the songs, no music in front of us. Within three hours we would have the basic take from zero. Sometimes the tune would change quickly from the acoustic guitar demo Zac had cut, but we're able to turn on a dime. Dave grabbed right on to that and kept us from overthinking the situation. He was able to help everybody shine on this record.

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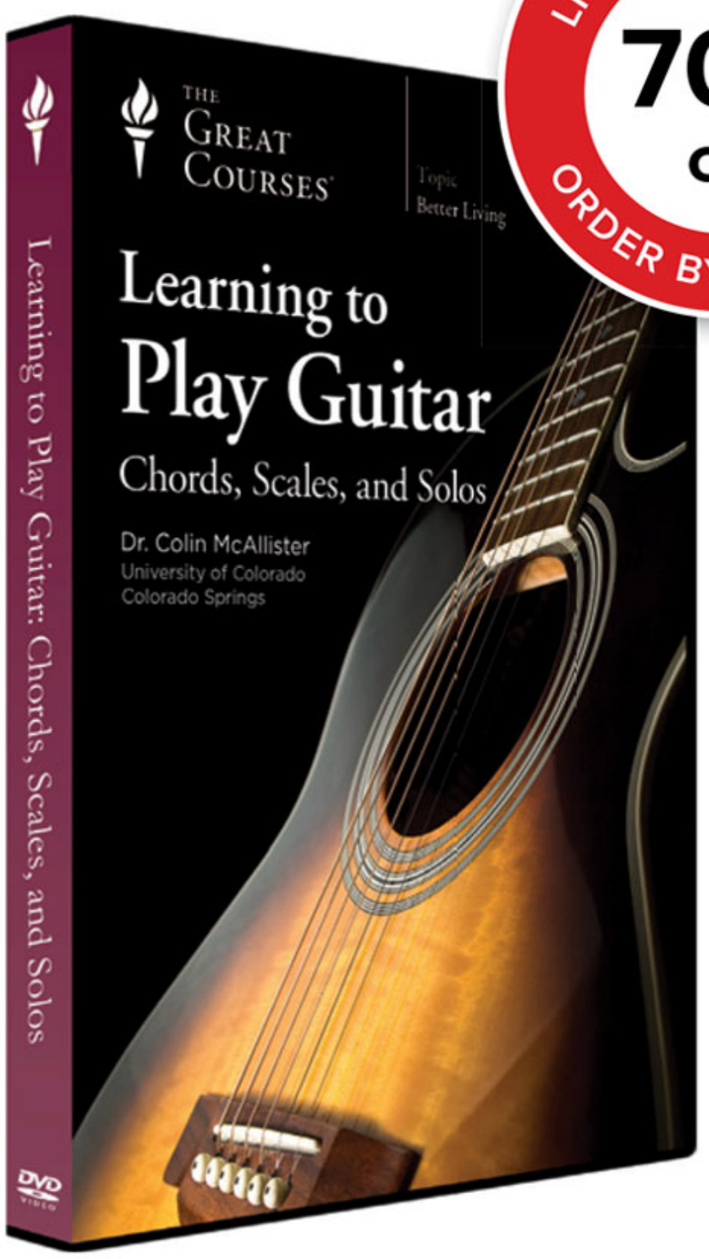

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John Driskell "Hop" Hopkins with 2015 Taylor Koa Series K24ce.

Cook, Bowles, and Hop all used Taylor acoustics on *Welcome Home*, but the electrics they played are as varied as their own individual styles. Hop relied mainly on two of his favorites, a 1991 Gibson Les Paul Custom and an Ernie Ball Music Man John Petrucci JP6 featuring a piezo-equipped tremolo bridge. "By no means am I close to the level of Petrucci, but I do enjoy his guitar," Hop says. "I like being able to go between acoustic and electric tones on some songs." Hop's banjo is a Deering, and his ukulele is a Kala.

Cook arrived at the studio without any of his own guitars—some of them were scattered about on touring trucks, and his main Firebird (a stock Nineties Gibson Firebird V) was on display at the Country Music Hall of Fame—so he borrowed Brown's mid-Sixties Firebird V as well as Cobb's Gibson Les Paul '52/'57 conversion (done by Terry Mueller). For one song he also picked up his early Thirties National Duolian, which he calls his "fingerpicking guitar."

Bowles is a fiend for Les Pauls, and on *Welcome Home* he alternated between his '59 and '60 Les Paul Specials as well as a '58 Les Paul Junior. He played a Duesenberg Peter Stroud signature Dragster model on a couple of tracks, and he was even able to get his own entry into the signature guitar market, the Ibanez CBM100, onto the record. "The Ibanez Artist has been my go-to slide guitar for years," he says. "Ibanez was going to re-introduce it, and they reached out to see if I wanted to get involved. I asked if I could do a gold-top version, and they said sure. They let me do my thing with the hardware, and I've got Seymour Duncan Antiquity pickups in it. I'm playing it on the road now, and it's killer. It's got a lot of mojo."

Life with the ZBB leaves little time for extra-curricular activities, but the guys try to grab whatever free moments they can to recharge their creative batteries. For Hop, who graduated from Florida State University with a degree in General Theatre, it's all about the roar of the greasepaint. In addition to a few plays, he's recently acted in a couple of independent films— 2015's *Careful What You Wish For*, starring Nick Jonas and Paul Sorvino, and the upcoming *Adolescence*, starring Tommy Flanagan of *Sons of Anarchy* fame.

Bowles is a first-time dad (he and his wife Kylie recently welcomed daughter Hattie to their family), and he's been steadily building a cottage industry as a writer of children's books. In January he published his third book, *When You're Feeling Sick*, and he's got more on the way. "These books are just my way of giving back and trying to be a positive force," Bowles says. "You just can't go wrong with kids, man."

Cook has released several fine solo albums in the past, but he admits that a follow up to 2013's *North Star* might take a while. Like Bowles, he's acclimating to parenting duties (he and his wife Brooke recently gave birth to their first child, a boy named Charles), and when he's not occupied with the ZBB, he's content to spend his available moments with his family. "That's pretty much all I do," he says. "Outside of music, I'm 100 percent focused on my home life." He pauses, then adds with a laugh, "Okay, well, I have been learning to cook, so that's something." GA

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BORN TO ROCK

A pioneering female guitar hero, **Lita Ford** has accumulated a collection of stunning guitars as wild and unpredictable as her four-decade career.

BY **RICHARD BIENSTOCK**
PHOTOGRAPHED BY **KEVIN SCANLON**

BACK IN the early Eighties, there were no other girls out there that could play like I could play," Lita Ford says. "And I had to prove it was me playing those songs, because nobody could accept it."

These days, it's a well-established fact that Ford knows her way around a guitar. From her groundbreaking work in the Seventies with all-female hard rockers the Runaways to her string of shredding, glam-tinged melodic metal efforts in the Eighties and early Nineties, Ford has remained a highly visible figure in the rock-guitar world for more than 40 years. Recently, she has also been celebrated as a major influence on a new generation of guitar-playing frontwomen, in particular Halestorm's Lzzy Hale, who credits Ford with "kicking the door down" for waves of female six-string slingers.

To make that happen, however, Ford occasionally had to do some actual kicking. As she explains, you may underestimate her skills as a guitarist, but you'll do so at your own peril.

"I remember one time around '81, there was a guy in the front row at a show," Ford recounts. "He was right up against the stage, and he had an unopened can of beer. While I was playing, he shook that beer. I was watching him do it, but he didn't know I could see him. I was acting like I *didn't* see him. I knew he was gonna spray me down with his beer, so I waited for him to get the can up, and as he was about to pop the little tab, I walked over and kicked him in the wrist as hard as I could. I know I broke his wrist, because I used to wear these great big clodhopper platform shoes onstage!" Ford lets out a laugh. "But it was like, Dude, you're gonna spray me with *that?* I don't think so. If

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someone spits at me, I spit back."

Ford, now 58, no longer needs to approach every gig ready to do battle. Her music, however, remains as aggressive as ever. Her most recent album, 2012's *Living Like a Runaway*, was a solid return to hard-rocking form, hailed by many as her strongest effort in more than two decades. And in 2016, she released a self-penned autobiography, also titled *Living Like a Runaway*, that chronicled her lifetime in music. "It's like the manual of the first girl rock guitarist," she says of the tome. "Because I *was* the first guitar player to do what I do. I mean, there was [*former Runaways bandmate*] Joan Jett, but she was more of a singer and rhythm guitarist. She wasn't really a lead player. So there was nobody else. I thought people would want to hear about that and not just, you know, 'What drugs did she do?' 'Who did she sleep with?' Dude, the saying is sex, drugs, and *rock and roll*. You can't forget that last one, you know? It's a very important part."

As Ford tells it, her indoctrination into rock and roll came very early in life. Born in England, she moved with her family to Long Beach, California, at age four. Before she was even a teenager, she says, she was already taken with the heaviest sounds of the era. "I asked my mother for a guitar," she recalls. "And she bought me this Sears acoustic model. I ended up giving it away to my girlfriend, and I got another guitar that was a step up from Sears—it was, I don't know, maybe a Bloomingdale's model or something. I was playing heavy metal on this acoustic guitar. It was all Black Sabbath and Deep Purple riffs, but it just didn't sound right to me. It didn't have the balls I was looking for."

After a cousin chaperoned Ford to a 1971 Black Sabbath concert at the nearby Long Beach Arena, she knew exactly what she needed. "I saw Tony Iommi, and I had to have a Gibson SG," she says. "I just loved the darkness and the low end of the sound. I went to this hospital where my mom worked, and I bullshitted my way in and got a job. I saved up $375 from that job and bought myself a chocolate-colored SG."

Ford was still playing that SG when, a few years later, she joined the Runaways at the tender age of 16; it's the guitar that can be

heard on the band's classic, self-titled 1976 debut. At that time, however, she needed to update her amplifier. "I had been using my father's reel-to-reel," Ford says, laughing. "It was this huge thing, and it had an echo on it that sounded like a delay, which was great. It was like, Wow, I've got effects and everything! It was bizarre, but it worked. But once I was in the Runaways, I used a Marshall."

Later in 1976, Ford augmented her Runaways gear with a pair of eye-catching Hamer Standards—one black, one white. These Gibson Explorer–inspired guitars became her main instruments throughout the rest of her tenure with the band and can be heard on the Runaways' later albums.

Ford says she enjoyed her time in the Runaways, but the group's explicit punk stance proved somewhat suffocating, considering that she'd grown up on a steady diet of Iommi, Ritchie Blackmore, and Jimmy Page. "I would go home and learn stuff like 'Stairway to Heaven'—all the riffs, all the solos," she says, "because that was the type of stuff I wanted to play in the band. But when I got into rehearsal, we would end up doing, you know, 'Cherry Bomb.' It was always that chunky, straight-ahead thing."

It wasn't until the Runaways dissolved in 1979 that Ford finally found the space to spread her guitar wings. At the dawn of the Eighties, hard rock and heavy metal were about to experience a major resurgence, in large part due to the up-and-coming New Wave of British Heavy Metal bands. Ford quickly made herself at home in this new world, reinventing both her image and her music. "I started playing harder, heavier," she says. "I got off on that. I figured, I'll make up my own 'Stairway to Heaven,' you know?

"I really took over my own self," she continues. "I cut my hair and changed my clothes. I came up with my own style, my own look, my own way of playing." She also swapped out her guitars. "I got into B.C. Rich," she says. "They became my home away from home. [*B.C. Rich founder*] Bernie Rico, Sr. was just fantastic, and I was always over there carving out new ideas and helping to make new stuff. They would make anything I asked them to make. By the end of the Eighties, I had a stack of different B.C. Rich guitars, and I would play them all in concert, because I wanted to show them off."

By the latter part of the decade, Ford was also enjoying the success of a *bona fide* hit record: 1988's *Lita*. Her third solo effort overall, the album spawned two hit singles—the hard-rocking "Kiss Me Deadly" and the ballad "Close My Eyes Forever," sung as a duet with Ozzy Osbourne—and eventually became her first Platinum-seller. Yet, despite playing guitars in videos and onstage, and being credited as the sole performing guitarist in her albums' liner notes, Ford still had to contend with skeptics who doubted her abilities.

"I would play a show, and then afterward I would still get the question: 'Oh, Lita, that's such a great solo in "Close My Eyes Forever." Who played it?' And it's like, 'Are you fucking *stupid*? You just *saw* me play it.' I mean, c'mon. It was really unbelievable."

Nevertheless, Ford stuck to her guitar-playing guns, so much so that when she saw hard rock's popularity declining in the early Nineties, she opted to bow out altogether rather than change her music to suit prevailing trends. "The music scene was changing," she says. "Grunge was kickin' in, and I was getting tired. So I said, 'It's a good time to disappear.' What else was I gonna do? Go be a country star?"

Ford did indeed disappear, spending roughly 15 years away from the music scene. She and her husband at the time moved to Turks and Caicos Islands, where they raised their two young sons far outside of the L.A. spotlight. But eventually, Ford says, "My kids got to an age where they didn't need mommy 24/7. And I was having rock and roll withdrawals. I wanted to be back doing what I do."

It wasn't easy to dive back in. "Not at all," Ford says. "It wasn't like riding a bike. I had to relearn how to do it. I hadn't been playing guitar all those years I was away. I even had to get used to wearing clothes again. Because I was living on a deserted island, all I wore was Billabongs. Then all of a sudden it was, 'My god, I've got on high heels and leather pants!' "

These days, Ford is fully back in the creative swing of things—high heels, leather pants, B.C. Riches and all. She's currently in the final writing stages for the follow-up to *Living Like a Runaway* (last year she also released the odds 'n' sods collection *Time Capsule*) and has plans to hit the studio soon to begin laying down tracks. As for the sound of the new music? "I don't want to give anything away," she says, "but it's very guitar-oriented stuff. Lots and lots of riffs."

In other words, classic Lita Ford.

"Yeah, absolutely," she says. "If it's in your blood, it's in your blood. It never really goes away." GA

1976 Hamer Standards

"These are both really early models. The black one is serial number 0048, and the white one is 0012. I used these guitars a lot in the Runaways. I got the black one first, and then the white one came later. I loved the way the headstock goes down and how a piece of the body hangs between your legs—it felt really badass when you put it on. For a while, I traded back and forth between the Hamer and my chocolate SG, but I became so in love with the Standard, especially after I got the white one, that I put the SG to bed for a while. These days, when I play a couple of Runaways songs in my shows I'll bring out the black one. The white one doesn't play as well as it used to, so it stays at home."

Eighties B.C. Rich Bich

"This guitar is on the cover of [*1984's*] *Dancin' on the Edge*, and I played it in the video for 'Gotta Let Go.' It has so many controls on it. Back then it was just fun and games, like, 'Let's put in three of these, maybe two of those.' There was a built-in flanger and phaser, a tone selector, and three preamps. But normally I would just set the guitar and leave it, so I sent it back and they took all the electronics out. Now there's just one preamp. The other stuff is still there, but it's inactive. I played this guitar to death. It's all scratched up, and there are chunks taken out, but it's still awesome."

1981 prototype B.C. Rich Bich double-neck

"A regular Bich double-neck is such a big guitar that I couldn't reach the bottom neck. The top of it came up above my boobs and the bottom of it was almost down to my knees. It was like wearing a dress. So I asked B.C. Rich, 'Can you guys make me a double-neck, but smaller?' And they did. It's the only B.C. Rich double-neck this size, which is why it's a prototype. The top neck is a 12-string with a built-in flanger and phaser, and the bottom neck is a six-string with a preamp. If you wanna play a lead in the middle of a pretty ballad, you just switch necks, which is what I do when I play 'Close My Eyes Forever' live. I play the tinkly parts at the beginning of the song on the top neck with the flanger on. Then in the middle, it goes heavy and I switch to the six-string."

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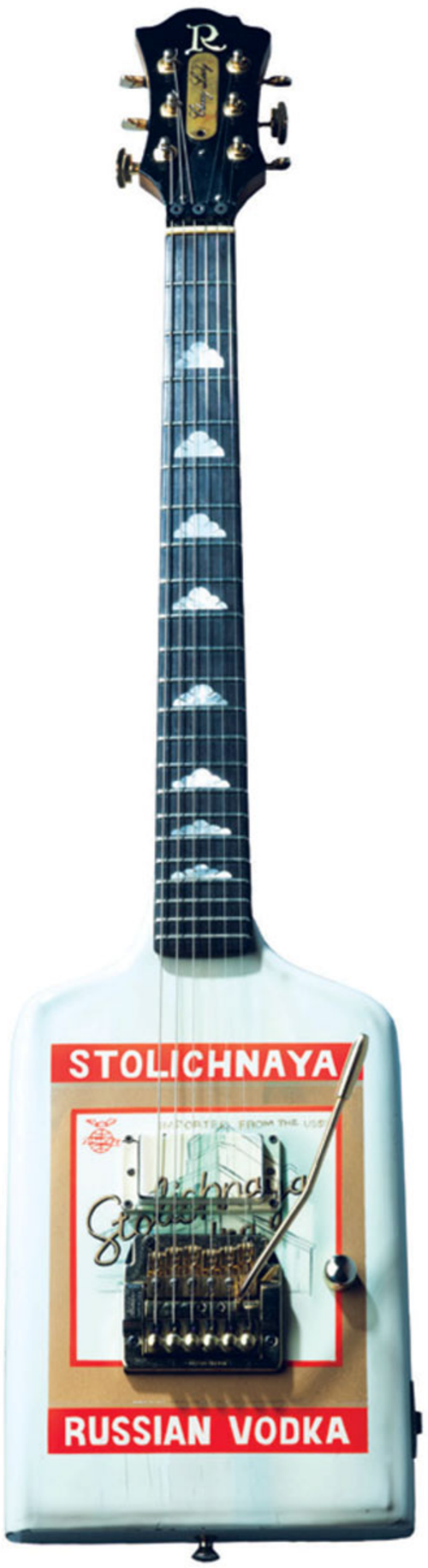
B.C. Rich Warlock "Fuck the World"

"This one's a beast. It's very similar to Morice, just with a different headstock; I got this a few years later, and the style of the Warlocks had changed a bit. Just like Morice, it has a preamp and DiMarzio Super Distortion pickups. Tone-wise, this one has a little more high end. On the fretboard, instead of markers I had B.C. Rich write 'LITA FORD.' The graphic on the body is a skeleton coming out of a toilet bowl and giving the finger. It's my Fuck the World guitar because he's flipping off the world. As for why he's coming out of a toilet, I have no fucking clue. My head was in the toilet, I guess!"



B.C. Rich Stoli

"I got the idea for this from Michael Anthony's Jack Daniel's bass. I was more into Stoli than the brown liquors, but shit, at that time I'd drink anything! [*laughs*] This was done in '84 or '85. It's as simple as possible—a bolt-on neck, two humbuckers, one little pickup-selector switch, a Kahler bridge, and a push-pull option on the volume knob for the preamp. It says 'Classy Lady' on the top. B.C. Rich would always write stuff on my guitars. I love them so much."

c. 1956-58 Gibson Les Paul Jr.

"When I bought this, I was really into slide playing, like George Thorogood/Billy Gibbons kind of slide. I played it on my version of Alice Cooper's 'Only Women Bleed,' which we did on the *Stiletto* album [*in 1990*]. I think that's some of the best guitar playing I've done. The last thing I used it on was 'Bad Neighborhood,' which was on *Living Like a Runaway*. There's a slide lead on that song, too. I always pull this one out in the studio. It's different from any other guitar I have."

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B.C. Rich Mockingbird

"This was one of the first B.C. Rich guitars I ever got. I used it in the video for 'Out for Blood' [*from 1983's* Out for Blood]. It's a hard guitar to play—it has a very big, fat, C-shaped neck—but it looks so kick-ass with the grain coming through the red finish. There are a lot of electronics in this guitar—a preamp, a tone selector."

B.C. Rich Mockingbird

"The yellow Mockingbird came after the red one. I just loved the color of it—it's so vibrant. I wanted to do something that was kind of shocking, where people would see it and go, 'Oh my god, that guitar is fucking bright as shit!' We used to call it jump-up-my-ass-vitamin-B-complex piss yellow. I still play it onstage, although the color has faded a little over the years."

Early Eighties B.C. Rich Eagle bass

"This is one of the early Eighties B.C. Rich basses. I'm not much of a bassist, but I had to have it for my collection. It's such a beautiful instrument, and it's clean. There are no scratches or anything on it because I don't play it that much."

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BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK PHOTOS BY YOSHIKA HORITA

FROM

THE LATE EIGHTIES throughout the Nineties, Marty Friedman made a name for himself as one of the top soloists in hard rock and heavy metal, first as one half of the acrobatic instrumental shred duo Cacophony with Jason Becker, and later as the lead guitarist in Megadeth, with whom he recorded five studio albums, including the multiplatinum 1992 effort *Countdown to Extinction*. But after a decade with Megadeth—a period that saw them enjoy an unprecedented level of mainstream success—Friedman abruptly quit the band at the dawn of the millennium to move to, of all places, Tokyo, and essentially start his music career all over again.

"I knew I wanted to play in the world of Japanese music, because even when I was in Megadeth that's what I was listening to all the time," Friedman explains today, relaxing on a couch in a conference room at his apartment building in Tokyo's bustling Shinjuku ward. He gestures to his surroundings. "And I knew if I was here I could make that happen."

Making his way in the world of Japanese music, however, was easier said than done. "I found that, in Japan at least, fans of Japanese music don't really know anything outside of that," he continues. "And Japanese fans of international acts—whether it's Adele or Celine Dion or Metallica—really don't pay much attention to the music being made in their own country. That means a fan of Japanese pop probably isn't going to know too much about Megadeth. So when I got here and started playing in this world"—Friedman pauses, then laughs—"it was, 'Who's the *gaijin* with the long hair?' "

These days, very many people in Japan recognize the *gaijin* with the long hair. Friedman, now 54, has become known not only as a musician—he records and tours in support of his own instrumental guitar music; has played with artists like pop singer Aikawa Nanase and idol groups like Momoiro Clover Z and AKB48; and has acted as a songwriter for many others—but also as a mainstream TV personality. He estimates that over the past dozen years he has made "hundreds" of appearances on Japanese television (it helps that he was relatively fluent in the language before moving to Tokyo), beginning with his star turn on a show titled *Hebi Meta-San*, or "Mr. Heavy Metal."

"That show was basically about taking the piss out of metal," Friedman explains. "When it was first pitched to me, I was like, 'I really don't want to do this.' But I tried it and I fell in love with the challenge. I would do things like morph a Japanese folk tune into Rush's '2112,' and it would have to make sense to both a traditional and a rock audience, and also tell a story. It was a lot of pressure but it actually made me a better guitarist." After a successful run, the network created a spinoff starring Friedman, *Rock Fujiyama*, that ran for four seasons. "The thing is," Friedman says with a hint of bemusement, "I had gone to Japan originally just to play Japanese music. But all of a sudden I found myself being handled by a big TV management company, and that opened every door in that world to me."

So much so that Friedman has over the past decade often found himself placed in odd and varied service. Since moving to Japan in 2003, he has appeared on news programs, variety shows, and even a popular Japanese cooking series whose title translates to "It's the Kitchen!"; been cast in national advertisements for everything from Fanta soda (for whom he was transformed into a manga character) to a Sumitomo Bank spot to beverage company Suntory's "Healthiest People in Japan" campaign; hosted an NHK radio program; acted on TV shows and in movies; and written a weekly column on J-Pop music, among many other endeavors. In fact, as he takes *Guitar Aficionado* on a walking tour through his Shinjuku neighborhood, he explains that it is his increasingly busy calendar that led him, at the last minute, to cancel our originally scheduled meeting one day earlier.

"I was asked to appear on this daytime talk show—it's like a *Regis and Kathie Lee*–type thing—where they discuss the topics of the day," Friedman says. "They brought me on to talk about Donald Trump and his family. They wanted to know if I talk about that sort of thing with my musician friends overseas. And I was like, 'If we were to talk about Trump, we wouldn't talk about his wife or his kids. That's like supermarket gossip-mag type of stuff!' I was saying this and they were cracking up. And it actually got picked up in the news here. I love doing that type of stuff. It's out of my element but it's so much fun."

The latest addition to Friedman's growing résumé of non-musical endeavors is his being named one of seven official Japan Heritage ambassadors by the country's Agency for Cultural Affairs. Serving alongside famous Japanese kabuki actors, chefs, and singers, as well as former New York Yankees outfielder Hideki Matsui, Friedman is tasked with promoting Japanese culture and history to the outside world in advance of the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. "To be chosen by the Japanese government to do such a thing is incredible," Friedman says. "I'll be doing a lot of programs here and also outside of the country to help introduce people to Japan. It's perfect for me, because I'm an outsider who's also an insider—I'm like a spy! So I know what outsiders are experiencing when they come here—that overwhelming feeling. And I can help with that."

Friedman was more than happy to serve a similar ambassadorial role for *Guitar Aficionado*, chaperoning us through the streets of Shinjuku, from the massive and always bustling Shinjuku Station, recognized as the world's busiest transport hub, to the neighborhood's colorful Kabukicho ("Red Light") district, to the incredibly narrow, bar-and-yakitori-restaurant-lined passageways of Omoide Yokocho, colorfully known as "Piss Alley."

"Shinjuku is like the New York City of Japan," he explains. "Things are happening 24 hours a day. There's always something to do, and because of the train station,

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Friedman at the gateway to Shinjuku's Kabukicho district, overlooked by the Hotel Gracery's famous Godzilla head.

pretty much everybody who comes to Japan will find their way through here. It's also a very convenient area to live in."

During our walk, Friedman offers up a tourist's primer on Tokyo, from where—and what—to eat, to where to shop, to where to get your music fix. First up, he says, "When you come to Shinjuku, plan to go shopping. You'll find a lot of great things to wear, especially 'rock band'–type clothes. There are several department stores in this area, like Marui and Isetan, with great men's departments. I also recommend a store nearby in Shibuya called 109 Men's. Shopping for clothes here is fantastic." Friedman laughs. "Especially for guys who are not extremely tall...like myself! You don't have to buy kid's clothes. In Japan, I can find a lot of great things that fit."

As we wind our way out of Piss Alley and into Shinjuku Station, Friedman leads us into the Odakyu department store, connected to the west side of the transit hub. With more than a dozen floors, Odakyu offers everything from restaurants to men's and women's clothing to furniture and home goods. The basement level, meanwhile, houses one of Japan's famous *depachika*, essentially a massive food hall. "There are a bunch of *depachika* all over the city," Friedman says as we descend downstairs. "Another great one that's maybe a little more upscale is nearby in the Keio department store." The food halls, Friedman continues, "are more of a local thing than a place tourists go." We stroll past cases boasting wildly colorful sushi and sashimi, Japanese teas and spirits, and an incredible array of rice balls, dumplings, and skewered meats and fish, among other delicacies, before Friedman stops at a counter to purchase a few *monaka*, a bean-paste and mochi-based Japanese sweet. He promptly rips open the packaging and shares them with our entire party.

> **WHEN I GOT HERE IT WAS, 'WHO'S THE *GAIJIN* WITH THE LONG HAIR?'**

As for what Friedman likes to eat when dining out, he states unequivocally that "sushi is probably my favorite food." But, he continues, "What I would recommend is to go to any restaurant that serves eel. I think the word eel, or *unagi*, scares a lot of people off, but it's so fantastic and so American-taste-bud friendly. You'd be surprised. If you like chicken teriyaki you can definitely go for eel. Plus, it'll give you bragging rights to people who freak out over stuff like that!"

As far as where to order your eel? "You can go to any good fish restaurant or barbeque place in Tokyo," Friedman

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> I WOULD DO THINGS LIKE MORPH A JAPANESE FOLK TUNE INTO RUSH'S "2112," AND IT WOULD HAVE TO MAKE SENSE TO BOTH A TRADITIONAL AND A ROCK AUDIENCE.

continues. "But the best eel can be found in Hamamatsu, a city a few hours southwest of here. That's where a lot of the eels are caught and where the top eel restaurants are."

After having your fill of *unagi*, Friedman suggests that readers of this magazine in particular head over to Ochanomizu, the famous "Guitar Street." "That's where all the guitars and effects in the world wind up," he says. "It's just guitar store after guitar store, and there's so much cool stuff. It's crazy! These days, the thought of going into one of those places and trying out a bunch of things makes me want to jump off a building. But I remember being a kid and wanting to play with all the different effects and gear. That wonderful feeling still exists in Ochanomizu. Plus, any kind of instrument shopping in Japan is fun because there's a ton of stuff in a really small space."

Finally—and perhaps not surprisingly—Friedman says that if you come to Tokyo, "go to a Japanese concert. Either at a small venue or a big venue—it doesn't matter. If you can only go to one place, make it the [*Nippon*] Budokan. It's not the best-sounding room in the world, but it's magical. Also, try not to just go and see an American band that happens to be playing here. See a Japanese band playing Japanese music. You'll find that a lot about it is very similar and familiar, but at the same time the melodic sense is completely different."

It should be noted that even with his full immersion into Japanese music and pop culture, Friedman never completely left his love for metal music behind. He has released albums like *Tokyo Jukebox* and *Tokyo Jukebox 2*, on which he incorporated the type of aggressive, exotic-scale-flavored soloing of his Cacophony and Megadeth days into reinterpretations of Japanese songs. Then, in 2014, he made a wholesale return to the American market with the instrumental album *Inferno*, his first Stateside release in a decade. The album was so well-received that Friedman is currently putting the finishing touches (at the time of our meeting, he has just two more days of guitar tracking scheduled at a Shinjuku-area studio) on a follow-up that will be issued later this year. He also physically returned to the U.S., performing for fans at the January 2017 Winter NAMM convention in Anaheim, California, where he unveiled a new Jackson signature model guitar. He says he has plans to do more future touring in the U.S.

As for whether he feels more American or Japanese these days? "I feel like both," he says. "It's weird—it's like you have your favorite vacation spot that you love to go to, and for me that place was Japan. But eventually you go home—you never think of living in that place. But I did. And I wound up really enjoying it.

"So walking around Tokyo, and especially Shinjuku, it's like, 'This is my home.'" he continues. "But when I go back to America, that still feels like home, too, though maybe not when I watch American TV, because I don't know who anybody is anymore. And the ones I do know, they all look so much older!" GA

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A Pain in The Neck

PERFORMING A NECK RESET IS ALMOST NEVER A PLEASURABLE EXPERIENCE.

{ *BY FLIP SCIPIO* }

THE TRADITIONAL x-braced six-string flattop guitar design has remained in constant use since it was introduced on gut string guitars in the middle of the 19th century. Even though the x-brace pattern was modified circa 1928 to better withstand the increased tension of steel strings, an almost unavoidable feature of most x-braced guitars is that the top gradually changes shape as it slowly folds up under the constant strain of 160 to 180 pounds of string tension. These powerful forces can raise the strings off the fingerboard to an unacceptable height, necessitating removal of the neck in order to change its pitch angle and thereby lower the action.

This procedure is usually referred to as a neck reset, and it can be quite difficult to perform. Several different tactics are usually used to do this, and the one chosen generally depends on the type or brand of instrument that's on the operating table. Improper attempts to remove the neck can cause serious damage to the instrument, particularly since the majority of factory guitar necks are attached with a tapered dovetail-type of joint and an adhesive like animal hide glue, polyvinyl acetate, or aliphatic resin glue, all of which produce a tenacious neck-to-body joint. Since the neck block is usually solid wood, often with the grain running parallel to the grain of the 2mm/.0790" thick sides, it's easy to crack the neck block and/or the sides while trying to remove the neck as the joint is being heated up.

With guitars that are finished after the neck and body are joined together, like Gibson, Gretsch, Guild, or Lowden acoustics, one starts the process by breaking the finish buildup between the neck and the body. Once the neck is successfully separated from the body, the glue residues have to be removed before the heel area of the neck can be recut to change the neck angle. This reshaping of the heel is tricky by itself, especially with the elegantly flared CF Martin heel design, the outline of which grows smaller as you pare away a small wedge-shaped area on both sides of the heel.

Performing a proper neck reset on a good quality flattop guitar is decidedly preferable over simply shaving the bridge down to lower the action once the bridge saddle has been lowered to its limit. Removing wood from the bridge can adversely affect the tone, as the bridge is the main transducer that converts a string's tension into the energy that drives the guitar top. As a result, an unmolested bridge is a serious, desirable consideration for anyone buying a vintage flattop guitar. The fact that all major manufacturers keep the neck resetting procedure within their limited lifetime warranty policy illustrates that they are aware of the conundrum of responsive soundboard design versus string tension.

There was a time when I was taking many guitars apart simultaneously to do neck resets. This was when I was employed in the repair department at the Guild factory in Westerly, Rhode Island. When it was neck resetting time, I'd usually fill up one of the guitar racks on wheels with neck set candidates and take them apart using two opposing workbenches: one bench had a cradle with a 100-watt infrared light bulb that I'd use to heat up the fingerboard extensions, while on the other bench a large pressure cooker blew steam into the neck joints, which were adhered with hide glue. Once while my attention was focused on wrestling a neck off an older Guild F50R, I had placed a Guild B30 acoustic bass under the heat lamp without taking into account that the bass guitar body was twice as deep as a regular guitar and therefore much closer to the 100-watt heat source than is advisable. Startled by a warning scream from my superior, I whipped around just in time to see the B30's celluloid pickguard burst into flames. As I jumped to the opposing bench and threw the burning bass across the room, the smoke alarm went off. The whole factory had to be evacuated, much to the delight of the factory personnel, who got to enjoy an unexpected break in the springtime sun, peeling their apples and pears while laughing at me, since they all knew where such unrest usually came from. GA

New York Repairman Flip Scipio still resets necks. Sometimes. Visit flipscipio.com.

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A Year to Remember

FOR POSSIBLY THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, 2015 VINTAGE WINES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD ARE MOSTLY OUTSTANDING.

{ *BY CHRIS GILL, CWAS* }

I'M NOT THE biggest fan of the vintage charts published in most publications that review wine. While these charts were sometimes useful even up until a few decades ago, I find that modern winemaking knowledge and techniques have developed to the point where a large number of wine producers can make good wine even when weather conditions aren't always ideal. I also have found that the best winemakers consistently produce great wines year in and year out, so I tend to pay more attention to the producer than the vintage. Regardless of vintage reports, I always buy wines for my personal cellar from about 20 of my favorite wineries every year no matter what, and I think that's a more rewarding approach overall than just stocking a bunch of random wines from certain celebrated (or over-hyped) vintages.

However, there are instances where familiarity with recent vintages can be helpful. While I've become familiar with possibly more than a thousand different wines over the years, there are still times—particularly when traveling abroad—that I come across a wine list at a restaurant with nothing that I have previously tasted or that I have even read about elsewhere. When this happens, I either ask for a recommendation from the sommelier (if the restaurant has one) or I use a process of elimination to figure out which choice may be best, usually starting with the vintage.

This has led to several wonderful discoveries for me. For example, while dining at an Italian restaurant in Berlin in 2000, I recognized none of the wines on the list but knew that most of the Barolo and Barbaresco wines were from poor or below average vintages, while just one Tuscan wine—a 1988 Fontalloro—was from a good vintage. When the waiter's expression went from sober and detached to ecstatic and animated after I ordered the Fontalloro, I knew I had made the best choice, and I also discovered a wine that has become one of my favorite mid-priced Tuscans.

Memorizing vintage charts can be a chore however, and most wine enthusiasts can really only remember year-to-year ratings for wines from a handful of the best-known regions. Fortunately, one recent vintage has been rated outstanding to excellent for almost all of the major wine-producing regions, which as far as I know has never happened before. The 2010 vintage was highly rated for most major regions and varietals, but a few very important wines missed the mark, most notably Champagne and vintage Port.

But when it comes to greatness across the board, 2015 is turning out to be the year to remember. Early reports from sources I trust are exceptionally favorable for most 2015 Burgundy (although hail storms significantly reduced output of many Côte de Beaune and Chablis wines), Bordeaux, northern Rhone, and northern California wines. While it's still too early to accurately assess Barolo and Brunello wines from Italy, based on weather conditions that were very similar to the highly esteemed 2010 vintage, prospects for these wines look exceptionally promising as well. The same goes for vintage Champagne and Port, although it will be a few years before critical accolades for these wines will start pouring in.

What's even more surprising is that wines from regions like South Africa and Austria, which critics rarely wax poetic about, are earning some of their highest scores ever, and wines from Germany and Spain are also looking quite good. Hotter than normal conditions in Oregon's Willamette Valley and Washington's various AVAs, including the Columbia Valley, were good news for domestic wine drinkers who prefer a "hotter" California-like personality over a "cooler" European-style character—namely more concentrated fruit and higher levels of alcohol and residual sugar.

The only notable exception is Alsace. The higher temperatures of 2015 were not favorable for dry white wines from Alsace, with alcohol levels soaring up to 15 percent and above. While this could be considered ideal for sweet Alsatian wines, the hotter conditions also meant that the development of botrytis was scarce. Even so, the best producers in the Alsace region like Trimbach and Zind-Humbrecht will likely deliver outstanding wines as they consistently manage to do.

One other setback to the 2015 vintage is that prices, particularly for Bordeaux, Burgundy, northern Rhone, and many top California wines, will increase. While Bordeaux prices have yet to return to the outrageous levels of the 2009 and 2010 vintages, they're getting up there. I've also noticed that many California wineries, which have maintained stable pricing for years, started increasing prices with the 2012 vintage and some have made a noticeable leap upwards for 2015. Quality will certainly be easy to find from the 2015 vintage, but value may be much harder to come by. GA

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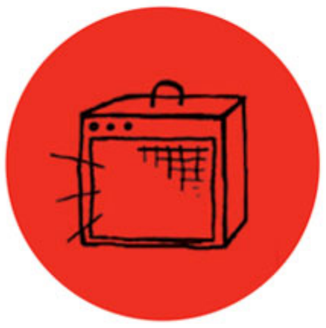


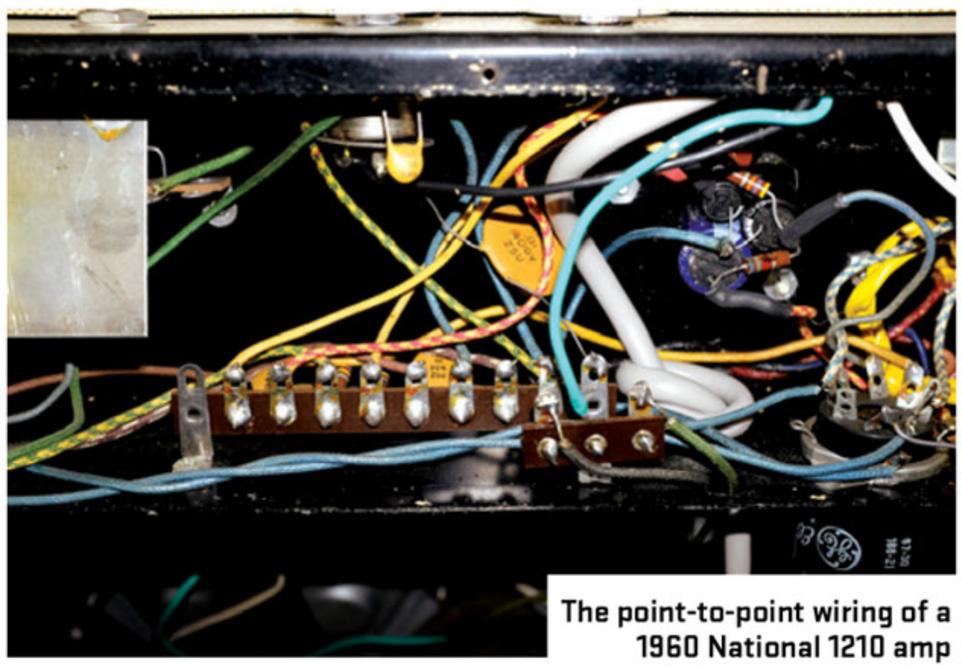
Uncertain Terms

THE TRUE DEFINITIONS OF THE AMP-RELATED DESCRIPTIONS AND PHRASES MOST COMMONLY MISUSED BY GUITARISTS, COLLECTORS, AND EVEN AMP COMPANIES.

{ BY MITCH COLBY }

NUMEROUS TERMS RELATED to guitar amp construction, features, and history are commonly misunderstood and misused. In fact, there are so many that it will take more than one Circuit column to cover just the ones that are most important to amp collectors. Let's start with the following four:

Point-to-point wiring: True point-to-point wiring (sometimes abbreviated "P2P") uses rails, which are also known as terminal lug strips, without any circuit board. As a result, the electronic components are basically mounted in air. While this may be good for tone, amps that are built using true point-to-point wiring can be difficult to work on and often become a "rat's nest" of wiring. Most vintage amps made by Valco (which includes the brands Gretsch, Montgomery Ward/Airline, National, Oahu, Sears/Silvertone, Supro, and more) were constructed this way through the mid Sixities, and some of the larger vintage Silvertone amps have wiring that is particularly messy. More recently Matchless amps (made by noted Valco amp aficionado Mark Sampson) were wired this way.



The point-to-point wiring of a 1960 National 1210 amp

Hand-wired: Amps with point-to-point construction are usually hand-wired as well, but the term "hand-wired" can apply to a significantly wider range of construction techniques. Totally hand-wired amps could have components mounted above phenolic or epoxy-glass boards (or wax-impregnated fiberboards) either using strip terminals (Vox), turrets (Marshall, Hiwatt), or eyelets (Fender). Most, but not all, modern "boutique" amps are wired this way. These amps are the easiest to maintain and repair as the components are easy to access for service or replacement.

However, some amps that have printed circuit boards may also be partially hand-wired. Usually this means that their pots, switches, tube sockets, and jacks are hand-wired and securely mounted directly to the chassis. This method is generally more robust and reliable than having the pots and sockets mounted directly to the circuit board for a number of reasons. Many acclaimed boutique amps use printed circuit boards (not that there is anything wrong with that) to facilitate construction and keep costs lower.

"British watts" vs. "American watts": These terms aren't as prevalent as they were years ago, particularly during the Seventies. The difference between the two even became the basis for an ad campaign about 35 years ago, when Rose Morris (the worldwide Marshall distributor) and Unicord (the U.S. Marshall distributor) put out advertisements that said something like "Marshall amps are louder because we use British watts, which are louder than American watts." The terms came about because in England the people in charge of standards chose RMS (root mean square) watts as the way to measure power. Meanwhile, during the same time the U.S. used several different ways to measure power, including RMS, peak power, music power, and others. Many companies would rate their amps using higher peak power standards, even though the amps actually put out less power than competing amps with a lower RMS power rating. One old U.K. Goodmans speaker I came across had two ratings printed on it: one in British watts and the other in American watts where the American rating was twice the British rating. The real reason that Marshalls were louder is that in the early days many of the amps that were rated at 100 watts actually delivered 100 watts without clipping. When fully driven into overdrive or distortion they could easily put out 150 or more watts, so naturally they sound louder than a distorted amp with peak power of 100 watts.

Plexi: The Marshall "plexi" era dates from around 1965 through the end of 1969, not including reissues. What distinguishes "plexi" Marshalls from others is the material that the front and back panels are made from. The "plexi" panel is a plastic called Perspex, the trade name for an acrylic material also known by the trade names Acrylite, Lucite, and Plexiglas. "Plexi" does not mean see-through, but rather it is a description for a Perspex panel that is painted gold and has black lettering. Marshall amps built before the "plexi" models had either white panels or lettering that was screened directly on the aluminum chassis. There are some JTM45s and JTM45/100 (the first production 100-watt heads) amps that have "plexi" front panels and cream-colored back panels. The term is most commonly misused as a description for hand-wired Marshall amps from 1969 through 1972 that actually had metal panels made of aluminum. While these are very cool amps, they are not "plexi"! GA

Mitch Colby helped develop many Marshall and Vox amp designs and is the founder of Colby Amplification.

PHOTO: CHRIS GILL

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Future Rock

Relish Phantom Jane

BY CHRIS GILL
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

IT'S UNUSUAL THAT the design of most electric guitars built today doesn't differ all that much from the first commercial solid-body models developed more than 65 years ago. Think about it—very few people would gladly drive a car that's essentially the same as a '52 Ford, and even the toasters in most households today are more technologically advanced than the most popular electric guitar models. Even though music has changed radically over that time span, electric guitars largely and steadfastly remain the same.

Relish Guitars from Switzerland is one of a few bold, adventurous electric guitar builders that has dared to challenge the status quo recently. We loved the Relish Jane, which appeared in this magazine's New & Cool column two years ago in the July/August 2015 issue, for its visionary construction comprised of an aluminum core sandwiched between an arched pressed-wood veneer top and back to form a light, resonant semi-hollow chamber. The aluminum core's center bar is also solidly attached to the neck and bridge, resulting in a single, unified base that captures every nuance of a string's vibration and delivers remarkable sustain.

But while the design and construction of the Relish Jane is undeniably revolutionary and innovative, at its core it's still the standard electric guitar we all know and love, with magnetic pickups and the usual volume and tone controls. However, Relish's latest version—the Phantom Jane—is an unapologetically modern instrument packed with an abundance of innovative technology developed by several other companies. Relish co-founders Silvan Küng and Pirmin Giger collaborated with Thomas Nordegg, the guitar tech best known for working with Frank and Dweezil Zappa, Steve Vai, and Yngwie Malmsteen, on this visionary guitar.

The Phantom Jane shares the same standard construction features of the regular Jane model, including a maple neck with dark strand woven bamboo fretboard, 25.59-inch scale length, and 24 medium jumbo stainless steel frets. The body is ash, and it's finished with black stain over white pore filler that enhances the wood's natural grain pattern. Pickups on our test example were a pair of Relish XV humbuckers, which have RAF connectors to facilitate fast swapping, and pickup selection is performed using flush-mounted, illuminated touch sensors.

The Phantom Jane's most remarkable new features are mostly hidden from view inside the guitar's hollow chamber, which is easily accessible thanks to a large rear cover that is held in place with magnets. Mounted inside the chamber are an Antares Auto-Tune ATG and Line 6 Relay TB516G wireless transmitter (compatible with Line 6 G70 or G75 receivers) along with electronics for the built-in GTC Revpad controller. The body's top also reveals a few different features from the regular Jane model, including the flush-mounted GTC Revpad Touchpad XY pad controller surface and its three assignable control buttons, a pair of additional knobs for the Auto-Tune functions (in addition to the master volume and master tone controls), and the brass RMC Sensor saddles. An 8-pin DIN connector mounted on the side handles MIDI in and out and audio out functions for the Auto-Tune feature.

Each of these built-in innovations is worthy of its own detailed review, but suffice to say that this guitar is packed with impressive wireless, effect processing and control, and Auto-Tune capabilities in addition to its stellar performance as a guitar itself. A Sustainiac driver is also available (not installed on our test guitar) for players who really want it all. All the technological additions stand on their own merits and truly rank among the best new innovative products for guitarists available today. All are also very musically useful and not gimmicky (or potentially dated) in the least.

With its comfortable, lightweight design, outstanding playability, and exceptionally expressive pickups, Relish's Jane design provides a solid, familiar, and pro-quality base that makes all the technological marvels packed inside seem more like natural additions than radical departures from the norm. Having all of these features elegantly integrated into a single package makes it very easy for players to instantly explore the incredibly expanded expressive capabilities of this truly modern instrument GA

PRICE $10,000 (approximately, depending on features)
Relish Guitars, relishguitars.ch

PHANTOM TOUCH Relish co-founder/managing partner Pirmin Giger on the Phantom Jane.

What were Thomas Nordegg's contributions to the Phantom Jane's design?
Thomas Nordegg's idea was to add lots of hi-tech features to our Jane but in a "stealth" fashion so you likely won't recognize the differences at first. That's why he came up with the name Phantom Jane. This inspired us to make the Phantom Jane in black with white pore filler. Most of the hardware is also black. The Phantom Jane look/finish is now also available in our standard Jane line—the Shady Jane!

Why did you choose the Line 6 Relay wireless transmitter over the other options on the market?
The Line 6 wireless transmitter is very reliable, easy to use, and has unbelievably low latency. Its impressive audio specs keep the guitar tone very pure and natural sounding. It really was the best choice for us.

Beyond the built-in technology features, does the Phantom Jane differ in any way from the standard Relish Jane model?
No. The Phantom Jane's construction is the same as the standard Jane model. The Phantom Jane has an ash body, while our standard Jane guitars are available with a wider choice of body materials, like walnut, cherry, maple, and ash.

Concept Meets Reality

2018 Lexus LC 500

BY MIKE DALY

SINCE THE 1989 INTRODUCTION of the LS 400 in the United States—the very first car offered by Toyota's luxury vehicle division, Lexus—the groundbreaking sub-brand has consistently led its Japanese competitors in the production of upmarket luxury sedans and coupes. But when family scion Akio Toyoda assumed Toyota directorship in 2009, he envisioned a more sporting identity for the luxury sub-brand. His first move was to greenlight the LFA supercar, a limited-production $375,000 Ferrari-challenger with a purpose-built 550-hp V-10. Toyota may very well have lost money on the LFA despite selling all 500 cars, but brand positioning is sometimes worth taking a hit.

In 2012, the company unveiled a concept car called the LF-LC, a "luxury coupe" interpretation of the LF platform that took the supercar's styling a step further. It was so warmly received by design critics that Akio Toyoda again pushed for a full production model, which he insisted should retain as much of the concept's styling as possible. On the heels of 2015's RC (positioned as a racing coupe), the resulting LC 500 hit Lexus showrooms in May after introductory fanfare, including a high-profile Super Bowl ad. The new model was the subject of a fantastic media launch on Hawaii's Big Island last February, and we were invited to experience a few hours of seat time.

Envisioned as a flagship luxury coupe with high-performance capabilities, the LC 500 has managed to retain a surprising degree of the LF-LC's striking design. Most notably, the concept car's huge wheels have been duplicated with 20-inch standard (and 21-inch optional) alloys that required an all-new front suspension design with double ball-joints. The LC is built on a brand-new rear-wheel-drive platform that combines high-strength steel, aluminum, and carbon fiber-reinforced plastic for a lightweight monocoque that's supposedly even stiffer than the carbon fiber-intensive LFA. This innovation in materials has fostered some of the exterior's more audacious styling elements, like the unusually short fender lips that barely hang over the front wheels, which recall the appearance of a racecar.

As with many Lexus products, the LC is available with either a traditional gasoline-engine or a hybrid powertrain (in which guise it is dubbed the LC 500h). The latter model will apparently sell quite well in Europe,

(top left) The 32-valve aluminum V-8; (right) Unusually short fender lips recall racecar appearance.

but to my boorish American tastes, the LC 500's 4,969cc V-8 was a far more alluring means of tackling Kona's gently curving perimeter circuit. As a further progression of the engine used in Lexus' GS F and RC F performance cars, the new 32-valve aluminum V-8 develops 471 hp at a high-revving 7,100 rpm (just 200 rpm short of its redline), predicated on an unusually high compression ratio of 12.3:1. Torque is commensurately strong, with 398 pd-ft arriving high in the power band, between 4,800 and 5,600 rpm.

The lack of significant low-range torque is probably one reason the LC is equipped with an all-new 10-speed automatic transmission, which implies that a downshift to improved drive ratios is never many revs away. The flexible tranny also allows for fuel-efficient cruising at highway speeds. Well programmed for sporty automatic use via four different drive modes (culminating in the most aggressive Sport+ mode), the 10-speed can also be manually shifted with wheel-mounted magnesium paddles. In tandem the driveline propels the LC 500 from zero to 60 mph in just 4.4 seconds, though top speed is electronically limited to 168 mph (perhaps the most discreet suggestion that the model is defined more as a luxury cruiser than track whip).

As such, the LC can be optioned to the nines with high-grade combinations of exterior finishes and interior trims, as well as a bevy of electronic comfort and safety equipment. Ten-way automatically adjustable seats, a 10.3-inch digital infotainment screen, heads-up display, Alcantara upholstery, a leather-wrapped gearshift knob, and an optional 13-speaker Mark Levinson 835-watt sound system were among the more standout amenities of our test car.

But all these goodies come at a cost, pushing the LC's curb weight to 4,280 pounds (4,435 pounds for the hybrid), which is by no means a slim waistline for a two-door sports car. As a comparative point of reference, a bare-bones Mercedes S-Class starts around 4,710 pounds, while the spartan Lotus Elise is more than a ton lighter at 2,041 pounds. It's actually a tribute to Lexus' suspension engineering and the LC's low center of gravity that the car reacts as nimbly and carefree as it does, belying the added weight of all that luxury.

Despite the comfort mandate, the LC's motor is tuned like the performance cars in Lexus' F portfolio. In Sport+ mode the quad-tipped active exhaust consistently coughs in a pleasing manner during upshifts. The symphony of valves and ignitions are doubtlessly made all the more enjoyable by a resonance tube that channels engine sound directly to the interior firewall (say what one will about the authenticity of such a feature). And the V-8 is more than worthy of the task, as I discovered during several lightning-quick multi-car passes in the quagmire of Friday afternoon traffic, to the undoubted irritation of the laid-back locals.

Further nods to performance are evident in various elements of the LC 500's architecture, like the engine's positioning behind the front axle, a relocation of the battery to the trunk, and an active rear spoiler that deploys at 50 mph. Our test car also came equipped with a $10,000 Performance Package that unites all of Lexus' stability components and software under one governing system, and additionally includes a carbon fiber roof and rear-wheel steering assist.

If it achieved nothing else, the LC 500 would demonstrate Toyota's continued leadership in its segment, re-imagining the refinement and performance character that Lexus might attain. But as it happens, the LC is a beautiful car that's impressively engineered, and should have no problem plying its way into the hearts and garages of well-heeled enthusiasts looking for a sporty daily driver. At its price-point and quality, the front-engine two-door sports/luxury coupe (with hybrid option) currently appears to have no direct competitor. Leave it to a Toyoda to think like Toyota. CA

MSRP: Base, $92,000; as tested, $102,995

Lexus, lexus.com

Rocket Ride

Musicvox 20th Anniversary MI-6

BY PAUL RIARIO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

MUSICVOX IS CURRENTLY celebrating 20 years of making wonderfully eclectic guitars and basses, but for Matt Eichen, owner and sole creative force of the brand, the journey hasn't always been easy. As a successful oral and maxillofacial surgeon during the day, Eichen had fueled his musical passion early on by playing bars at night and collecting pawnshop prize guitar brands like Eko, Harmony, and Danelectro, all of which would later inspire Musicvox's innovatively quirky designs.

After building 10 handmade prototypes, Eichen had no idea how his guitars might be embraced among players. Introduced at the 1997 NAMM show, his psychedelic Spaceranger guitar received passionately mixed reviews, mostly because of its, well…avant-garde pawnshop looks. Undeterred, Eichen released a Spaceranger bass and the more traditionally designed Space Cadet models. After further upscale refinements and positive reviews from *Guitar Player* and *Maximum Guitar* magazines, the guitars and basses eventually found their way into the hands of respected musicians like Cheap Trick's Tom Petersson, Gov't Mule's Allen Woody, and Devo's Mark Mothersbaugh.

But it wasn't until the hit 2002 movie *Austin Powers in Goldmember*, where Spaceranger guitars and a bass were played by Mike Myers' "shagadelic" band, that demand took off. Since then, Eichen has released a collection of distinctively hip guitars and basses like the MI-5 in solid and semi-hollow designs, custom production runs of the Spaceranger and Space Cadet, several incredible hand-built amplifiers, and the brand new Musicvox 20th Anniversary MI-6 guitar.

The 20th Anniversary MI-6 is Eichen's most radical design by far, with two elongated and deep cutaway horns that allow unfettered access all the way up to the 24th fret. This eye-catching silver super sparkle MI-6 seen here is a custom color limited to only three instruments with a special neck plate engraved with the number one, two, or three. The guitar's lightweight mahogany body and bolt-on maple neck give the MI-6 enhanced resonance and bottom end. Other premium features include a rosewood fingerboard with white pearloid block inlays, three-ply beveled pickguard, stop tailpiece and tune-o-matic bridge, reverse-slanted stacked hum-canceling single coil pickups, mini humbucker, five-position pickup switch, concentric stacked volume and tone controls, and locking tuners.

The MI-6 is certainly no wallflower, with an asymmetrical body and headstock that's decidedly meant to be noticed. I personally dig its retro space-age look, but even better is its sonic versatility. The MI-6 is big-sounding even in its pristine cleans, and its unorthodox pickup configuration lends itself to a plethora of gritty tones from garage rock to blues. Incorporating the high-output mini humbucker offers even bolder crunch sounds. I also love the guitar's slim neck shape, which makes the MI-6 a true double agent in effortless playability and tone to die for. GA

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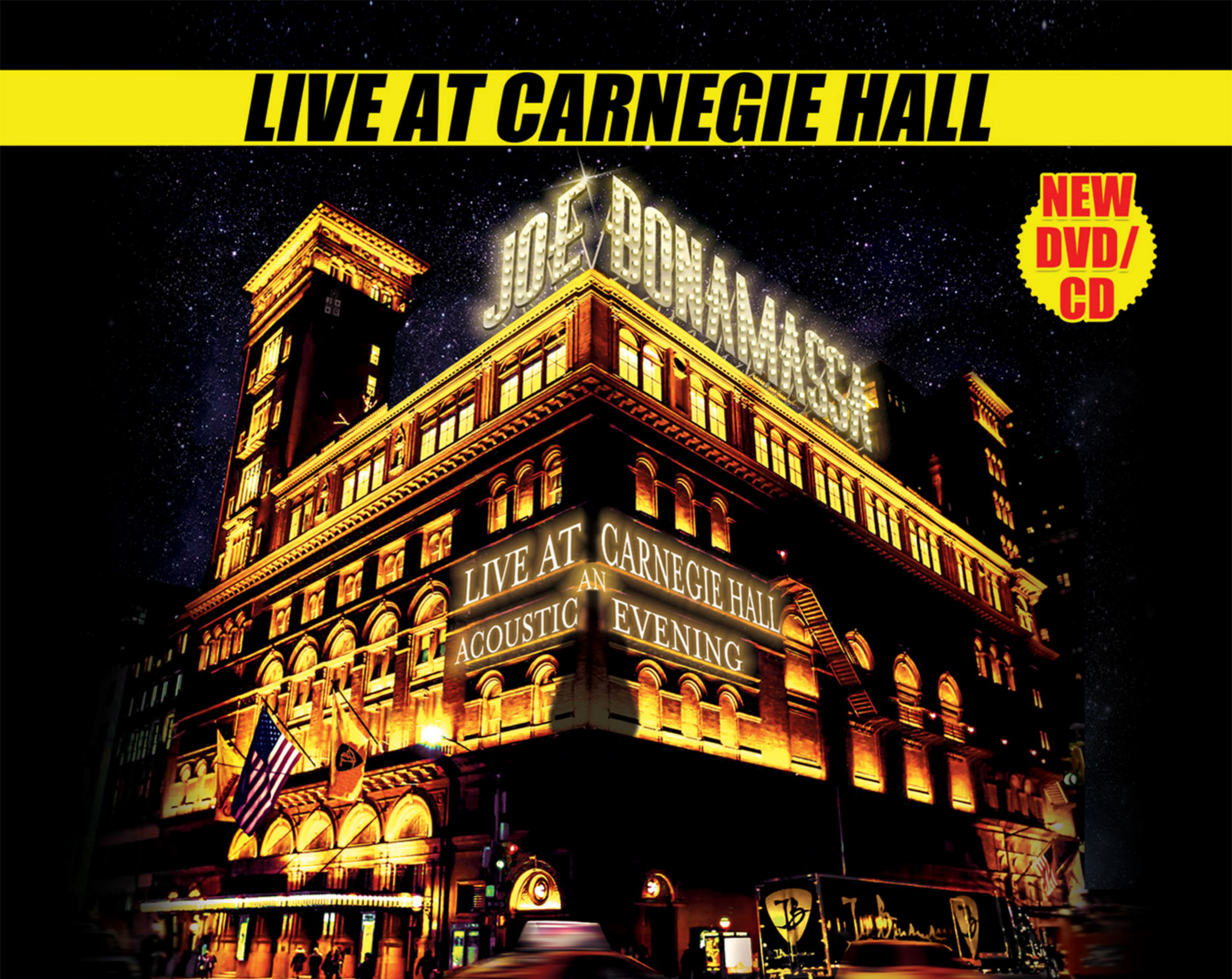

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Looking Back

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISSIE HYNDE, CAPTURED BY ROBERT MATHEU.

PHOTOGRAPHER ROBERT MATHEU has shot many bands—his work has appeared in countless magazines and on more than 100 album covers, and he authored the books *CREEM: America's Only Rock 'N' Roll Magazine* and *The Stooges: The Authorized and Illustrated Story*, which feature dozens of his photos. As a teenager living in Detroit in the late Sixties and early Seventies, Robert Matheu cut his teeth shooting local bands like the MC5 and the Stooges. By the end of the decade, he had relocated to Los Angeles and was working steadily for magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *Creem*.

Matheu estimates that he has over 300 film rolls of Pretenders photos in his archives, more than any other band he's shot. "I've never liked to call myself an official band photographer," he says, "but if there was one for the original Pretenders band, it was probably me."

For this shot of Chrissie Hynde, taken in April 1980 during the Pretenders' first U.S. tour, Matheu returned to his hometown to catch the band at the Motor City Roller Rink. "The first couple of years I lived in Los Angeles I went back to Detroit often to shoot bands because I had a sense that shows there were going to be much better there than shows in L.A.," he says.

Matheu convinced *Creem* to put the band, who had just released their self-titled debut album, on the magazine's cover. He took the cover photo for *Creem*'s August 1980 issue prior to that night's performance, and recalls he and Hynde "got along from the get-go." While shooting from the stage later that night, however, the singer turned her back on Matheu and his Nikon FTn. "She was just starting to get to know me, so it was kind of her way of telling me to fuck off," Matheu says. "My impulse was, 'Okay, fine. That's the shot you want me to have, then.' "

The image, which depicts Hynde's "Chrissie" guitar strap, Fender Telecaster, and the back of her Pretenders "U.S.A. Tour 1980" shirt, "speaks on a lot of levels," Matheu says. "But I didn't do a whole lot of pictures like that back then. It was just something I took for myself."

In 2006, Matheu submitted numerous photos for use in the Pretenders box set, *Pirate Radio*. This photo, which up until that point was previously unpublished, was among those chosen by Hynde for inclusion. Matheu says he reminded Hynde about turning her back on him and his camera, "And she said, 'Yeah, right. Of *course* I would do that.' " —*Richard Bienstock*

Signed, limited-edition prints of this photo—and additional images by Robert Matheu—are available from rockpaperphoto.com.

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